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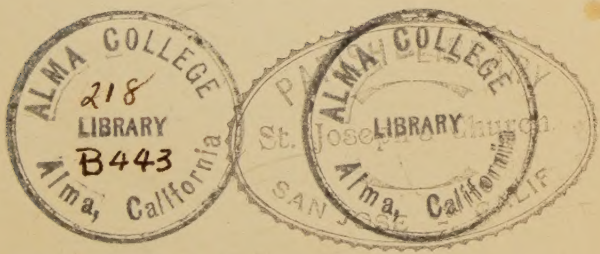
THE RELIGION OF THE PLAIN MAN

Robert Hugh Benson.

THE RELIGION OF THE PLAIN MAN

By Father

ROBERT HUGH BENSON



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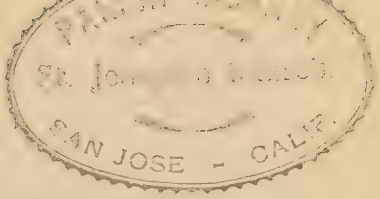


THE PREFACE

I AM perfectly aware that this book is open to an almost innumerable multitude of criticisms. It will be said, for example, that it is unscholarly and unlearned; because to deal with the subject of the Catholic Church and to omit all patristic literature and its consideration, and, instead, to take refuge in the Penny Catechism, is the sign of one who is afraid to face problems. It will be said that it is rhetorical and inexact, emotional and unintellectual, contemptuous and uncharitable. I shall be told to hold my tongue if I have nothing better to do than to appeal to man's weakness instead of his strength, to his imagination rather than his reason. In fact, so far as the book may be noticed at all by those who do not see with me in religious matters, I foresee quite a quantity of unpleasant remarks.

A book itself is its only defence; and yet it seems to me worth while, in this preface, to emphasize what I shall hope to emphasize again and again in the following pages, and to say that in substance some of those criticisms will be perfectly true.

The book is intended for the "man in the street," who, after all, has a certain claim on our consideration, since JESUS CHRIST came to save his soul. This man in the street, like myself, is entirely unable to discourse profoundly upon the Fathers, or to decide where scholars disagree in matters of simple scholarship. His religion is composed partly of emotion, a good deal of Scripture, partly of imagination and, to a very small extent, of reason. He is competent to say what he thinks a text probably means; and to recognize a few of the plainer facts of history, such as that Rome has always had some sort of a Pope, and that ambition and wickedness may perhaps have characterized certain persons high in ecclesiastical affairs. He is capable also of understanding that oaks grow from acorns, and athletes from babies; and of perceiving a law or two in the development of life; he can grasp that poison has a tendency to kill; and that two mutually exclusive propositions require a good deal of proof before they can be accepted as different aspects of one truth.

Now this kind of intellectual attainment seems a poor equipment for the pursuit of salvation; but it is undoubtedly the only equipment that many of us have, and it is GOD that has made us and not we ourselves.

Therefore if we believe in God at all—at least in a God of mercy or even justice—we are bound to acknowledge that this equipment is all that we actually require. To tell me that because I cannot infallibly pronounce upon an obscure sentence of St Cyprian's, I am thereby debarred from making up my mind about the necessary truths of the Christian religion, is to represent my Maker as unjust and capricious. I am only capable of that of which I am capable.

I have attempted therefore in these lectures, delivered, in more or less their present form, in the Church of our Lady and the English Martyrs at Cambridge, to deal with the question of the Christian religion from the standpoint which I have tried to indicate. I have quoted the Penny Catechism rather than St Thomas Aquinas, because the one is more accessible than the other to persons of moderate attainments. In this sense, though I sincerely hope in no others, it is an unscholarly and inexact book.

As regards its rhetorical emotionalism I can only say that a truth is not less of a truth if it is dressed in what may seem to some even a tawdry costume, and may perhaps be more attractive to certain eyes.

As regards the possibility of "contemp-

tuous uncharitableness," I am extremely sorry if I have given any cause for this accusation—I can only say that I have done my best to avoid it. But I have not attempted to avoid a poor sort of humour now and then; for I do not see why I need do so. There are both funny people and funny things in this world; and we are more and not less Catholic if we acknowledge their existence. But I think that I do not anywhere attribute bad faith or insincerity of any kind to my opponents; and that, after all, is the only unpardonable device in controversy. Nor have I anywhere mocked at any doctrine which has any right to be held as sacred by anybody. I have endeavoured to show that some intellectual theories are absurdly impossible; but never that spiritual experience is anything but holy and reverend.

Again, I have certainly appealed to man's weakness rather than his strength, for we have the best authority for believing that in this God's might is made manifest. As we may argue for the Incarnation on the ground of man's crying need of it, so we may deduce that man's ignorance necessitates a heavenly teacher.

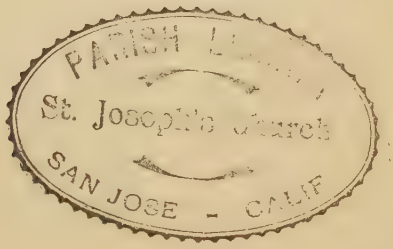
Finally I desire all competent persons to point out to me, if they will kindly take the trouble, the many errors into which I may

have fallen; and I submit all those errors unreservedly with the deepest filial piety to the correction and admonition of my Mother the Church.

ROBERT HUGH BENSON

The Catholic Rectory, Cambridge,
May, 1906.

P.S.—Perhaps it is unnecessary to remark that I have for the most part followed in my quotations the "Authorized Version" of the Scriptures, for reasons that will be evident from the nature of the book.



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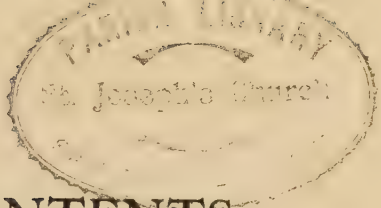

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THE RELIGION OF THE PLAIN MAN

I—General View of English Religion

(i)

IT would appear a ludicrous undertaking to attempt to deal with the Catholic Church in six lectures, when we consider the volumes that have been written, the theological learning poured out, the libraries that yet remain to be composed on this enormous fact. But my object, is to deal, not with the Catholic Church as a whole, but rather with some of its aspects as presented to the "plain man." Even so, no more than a bird's-eye view is possible.

I say to the "plain man"; because it was to him, after all, that CHRIST came and spoke, for him that He suffered and rose again, for him that He instituted the means of grace, and to him that the Gospel of salvation is sent. The plain man, therefore, and not the professed theologian, must, in a sense, be the final arbiter; it is the primary function of the theologian not to theorize and soar, but to interpret, explain and dis-

close to ordinary men the mysteries of GOD's revelation.

From the Gospels as well as from history we learn the perils of too much knowledge. It was the "man in the street" who understood our LORD, the doctor of the law who was perplexed and offended; it was the over-confident, over-weighted, over-acute scholar of the middle ages that was condemned by CHRIST's Vicar; and it was the simple and faithful, even if unlearned, Catholic who has always been approved by the same authority. It is necessary, therefore, to remember that no doctrine can be of explicit faith, no theory be a pivot of salvation, no scheme a condition of redemption, which cannot be—I do not say understood—but at least apprehended by the simple folk whom CHRIST died to save. The Faith may be huge and complex; but faith is a single act.

I propose, therefore, in these lectures to deal with my subject from this point of view, and no other; and for this purpose to construct a dummy-figure with the brain of an average man, to endow him with sincerity, fearlessness and a hunger for God, to trace the workings of his mind when confronted with difficulties, to follow the fortunes of his spiritual quest, and to attempt to understand and interpret the reasons that affect

his will. And in order to make our attempt practical rather than theoretical, we will place him in England, under average conditions; we will give him no extraordinary opportunities; we will allow him no great capacities beyond that for GOD which all men possess; we will suppose him to have accepted Christianity in general as the highest representative of the mind of GOD, and its Founder as divine; and to desire to know which of its many presentations is the true one. Lastly, for the sake of brevity, we will give him a name, that stands on the one side for one who was dear to our LORD beyond all others, and on the other—from its very simplicity—as representing an aggregate of those qualities I have tried to describe.—His name is John.

1. As he looks out on to the religious world of England to-day, he is at first confounded by the numerous claimants on his belief. As one who has accepted Christianity in the main, he sets aside immediately all those ethical and religious bodies of persons who repudiate that name, and even some of those who claim it. He has nothing to ask of Christian Science, of Mormons, or the Abode of Love; for we must remember that he is but a plain man, uncoloured by fanaticism. Yet still the call

that "this is the way, let him walk in it" is sufficiently plural to bewilder him. As he goes down the streets of his native town, awake for the first time to the huge issues of life and eternity, he sees, it may be, half a dozen places of worship, each bearing a different name, and each, presumably, claiming to be the purest well of salvation known to man. He is almost daunted at the beginning of his quest. How is it possible for him, a man who has neither leisure nor learning, and who is sufficiently modest as to his natural infallibility, to distinguish in the chorus the voice that calls him to GOD?

Yet, when he makes his inquiries, talks personally to various divines, and lays before them his troubles, he is greatly reassured by their conversation.

"You must not think," they tell him, "that every denomination proclaims a peculiar faith. It is on minor points only that we differ one from the other. This man prefers one discipline, that another; the hymns of Wesley are pleasant to those who bear his name, antipathetic to others who do not. In the main we are at one; the great truths of Christianity are the same to us all; our witness is on one note though the tone may vary, for we all base our religion upon the written word of GOD; it is here in a book

bound between boards; it is accessible to all alike, as is also the free and princely Spirit of God who assists each sincere searcher after the Divine and brings him to the truth that makes him free. And, if you wish for proofs of this charity and brotherliness, you can find them in the facts of the time. We have learnt at last that what unites us is greater than what divides us; we are agreed, for example, that Bible religion should be taught in the schools without the peculiar tenets of our various denominations; our ministers and our people meet on the same platform for missionary, social, ethical and devotional work, and for every great spiritual enterprise. Read your Bible, my dear sir, with prayer to God, mix with your fellow-men, attend the place of worship of any denomination that finds a place in the Federation of the Free Churches, and you will find that our words are true."

It is an immense relief to John to hear these words, for he need no longer fear that he is called by God to decide between claims on which he is deeply ignorant; he thanks his friends, and he goes home with his Bible.

Three months elapse.

2. At the close of his three months he is

not so completely at peace as he was at the beginning; for he has found the Bible, approached as a dogmatic work, unsuited to his own capacities. From his friends' words he had half expected to find it to be a code of rules, an ordered creed, a collection of precise maxims and statements. But in fact it is something very different.

There are intricate histories of persons who appear to be of no great or practical importance, of tribes and peoples whose names he cannot even pronounce. There are innumerable stories, some inexpressibly touching, some apparently fantastic, some which have an appearance of half-truth half-fable which he hopes he is not expected to believe. There is a quantity of poetry which he cannot understand, although he draws from its reading a mysterious pleasure that he cannot explain; an abundance of logic of which he cannot apprehend either the premisses or the conclusions; a collection of splendid visions that bewilder him; but above all the history of a life set like a jewel in the midst, so glorious, so pathetic, so triumphant that his hunger for GOD increases tenfold.

But of precise statements of doctrine there are very few. It seems then that he must have an interpreter. "How can I

understand," he asks, "except some man should guide me?"

He is a careful and earnest man, and he has made notes in the course of his study; and from these he selects three or four texts that more particularly bewilder him. They appear to him either so plain that he is amazed that his friends do not give greater evidence of their observance, or so deep that they are beyond his understanding altogether; and with these in his hand and his mind alive to impressions, he consults his friends in order.

His first interpreter is the Baptist minister; and to him he puts his four selected questions.

"My dear friend," is the answer, "in this first text, 'Except a man be born of water and of the spirit,' etc.,* you have put your finger on a most important matter. That is one of our special tenets. 'Except a *man*,' says the Gospel, not 'a child.' We are most strict on the matter of what we call believers' baptism. Besides, even if you think that we press the text too hard, how can an unconscious child be affected by such a ceremony?

"With regard to your second point, 'This is My Body,'† I answer that this is a beautiful and touching ceremony institu-

* John iii, 5. † Matt. xxvi, 26.

ted by our LORD, to teach us the union of believers in Him. We practise this regularly in our church.

"Your third point is another matter altogether. It is doubtful what our LORD meant when He apparently gave a commission to forgive sins.* Probably it was no more than a command to preach the saving Gospel through which sins are forgiven. If it was more, it has certainly died with the apostles. You must not take this too literally.

"As respects your fourth point, 'The Word was made Flesh,'† this is one of the texts that demonstrate our LORD's divinity."

The next friend that John approaches is the Salvation Army captain; but he is astonished by the answer he receives. He is told that the last point is indeed most important; that if JESUS be not GOD there can be no remission of sins through His Precious Blood; but that the first three points are wholly unimportant. Sacraments, he is informed, are purely external, arbitrary symbols, that can be varied or abolished as customs change. For baptism the Army has practically substituted the waving of a flag.

The Presbyterian tells him that the first

*John xx, 23. †John i, 14.

two points and the last are vital; but adds that a properly ordained minister is necessary to the validity of sacraments, contradicting the hint given by the Baptist that every layman is a priest.

The Congregationalist stoutly maintains that ministers are no more than preachers, and that every form of sacerdotalism is contrary to the true Gospel.

The Wesleyan agrees with the Baptist, except on the point of believers' baptism. Children too, he says, are capable of being incorporated into the church.

Finally the Unitarian, who claims to be a Christian in the highest sense, tells John that he is altogether at fault, that he has missed the whole point of the Bible, which is ethical not dogmatic, and still less ceremonial; and he adds the last stone to John's dismay by dismissing his last text altogether as being either the addition of a later hand, or, if not, merely a poetical statement of the supreme humanity of JESUS CHRIST.

At the end of his week's inquiry John returns home convinced completely of one single fact, namely that the Bible is insufficient as a guide to true religion.

A month later he puts his difficulties to a sympathetic friend.

"I am altogether puzzled," he says. "When I took up my Bible, I soon discovered that I needed some sort of interpreter who would inform me as to what parts of it concerned vital religion. For example, it cannot be necessary to salvation or even to piety to know the history of Maher-shalal-hash-baz.* I set down, therefore, a few explicit statements from the New Testament—statements pronounced in three cases by our LORD Himself, and the fourth concerning His essential nature by His most intimate friend; and I took them for their interpretation to those who had told me that the true religion was built upon the Bible, and that all Protestants were agreed on all vital points. Yet of the six groups whom I so consulted no two agreed on all the points; one dismissed them all, others added information which others again denied.

"Nor can it be said that these points are not vital. If our Blessed LORD thought it worth while to speak so explicitly of ceremonies, it is scarcely decent of His followers to despise them. These points, too, cannot be theoretical; they are the most practical of all; they concern the beginning of the Christian life, its sustenance and its cleansing. They affect, not abstrac-

* Isa. viii, 1.

tions, but actions. Each of my friends may be right in his interpretation, but they cannot all be."

"My dear fellow," answers his friend, "you are perfectly right to be dismayed. You have found the need of an authorized interpreter of the Scriptures. It is, as you say, impossible to be an undenominationalist and to retain the Christian faith. The process of this new heresy is that of corrosion; little by little it wears away what has been called the impregnable Rock. If one believes in baptism, another does not; therefore, 'by all that is sacred in that holy word, let us be liberal,' cries the undenominationalist, 'and abolish baptism! It is narrow-minded and bigoted,' he says, 'if not positively uncharitable to hold for vital what my equally learned and holy brother does not!'

"Do you not see, John, that undenominationalism is a state, not a place; it is transitory, not permanent? What is required then, and what GOD in His mercy has provided, is a steady authorized witness and interpreter of the truth of His Scriptures. We must have definite unchanging creeds for the laity, searching articles of religion for the clergy, a liturgy that enshrines the Faith in devotional form. In all else there is change and decay; but it

is in the Catholic Church of God of which a branch happens to be established by law in this island that the final authority is to be found. You will find there all that you need; all the essentials of which I have been speaking. She uses the sacraments which CHRIST ordained, and proposes to us the Faith which He revealed. 'Grace and Truth came by JESUS CHRIST.'* Grace and truth still continue to flow to us through the channel of the Church of England!"

This eloquence, from the mouth of a sincere and pious man, affects John profoundly; and in a few months' time he has settled down as a communicant member of the Church of England.

* John i, 17.

(ii)

John is sincerely happy in his new home. He finds there all that his friend has promised him—unchanging creeds, the administration of sacraments, and a prayer-book of incomparable English. He is attracted by the decent ceremonial, the culture of his clergy, the music of the choirs, and the beautiful architecture of the church in which he worships.

He also finds there what are to him far more important indications that he has chosen right; he discovers genuine piety among churchmen, sincerity, enthusiasm, a love of God, and self-denial. He sees communities of men and women who have given up all to serve Jesus Christ more perfectly; clergy and ladies labouring among the poor; vast and generous benefactions to church objects. It appears to him that in a hundred ways God has set His seal upon the Church of England. He has caused her to increase and multiply; she has branches in at least all English-speaking lands as well as missions to the heathen. On the one side she is wealthy and respected; on the other she is devoted and genuinely religious.

1. His first doubt as to her divine voca-

tion arises from a sermon that he attends in an university church. As he sits there one Sunday he is amazed to hear the preacher, who is an eminent dignitary and scholar, declare plainly (if words mean anything) that the corporal resurrection of CHRIST is not in its literal sense an article of the faith. He further hears that the Church of England is not committed to the Virgin Birth of the SON of GOD in such a manner that the laity and even the clergy may not disbelieve it if they will.

He expects, of course, that some notice will be taken of the sermon by authorities; but beyond the contradiction of it by the bishop in whose diocese the preacher ministers, in a sermon preached a few weeks later, nothing takes place. There is discontent among John's friends, some murmurs, a protest; and the matter drops.

John succeeds in keeping his dismay to himself; but on hearing another dignitary of his Church propose a change of pulpits with his Nonconformist brethren in the ministry, and state, almost explicitly, that episcopal ordination is no more than a party custom, he can no longer keep his difficulties quiet. He consults, therefore, a clerical friend of wide sympathies, but belonging to the High Church party; and receives the following answer:

"You must not be dismayed, my dear sir; you must remember that men are but men; and these, above all, Englishmen who will have liberty at all costs. I agree with you that it is terribly sad that our bishops take no action; that it is scandalous that such doctrines should be impugned; but I always tell myself, and I tell you the same, that we are not concerned with what this or that man may say;—we are concerned only with what the Church herself says explicitly in her creeds, her prayer-book and her articles."

John objects that the preachers who have offended him themselves profess obedience to the said creeds and prayerbook; but that they put a wholly false interpretation upon them.

"You have said it," answers his friend; "'a wholly false interpretation.' The creeds are clear enough, as you confess. In other words, the Church of England as a whole is orthodox; it is only her individual ministers who are unfaithful. That, then, is the bishops' affair; not yours or even mine."

John is not wholly satisfied with this talk of schools of thought; it seems to him that the divine whom he has consulted is more latitudinarian than he professes; but for the present his doubts are quieted.

Upon hearing, however, a few months

later, two sermons on consecutive Sundays—one declaring the Sacrament of Penance to be a divine institution, necessary for the forgiveness of mortal sins committed since baptism; and the other denouncing it as a blasphemous fable, invented by power-loving priests, clean contrary to the pure Gospel of CHRIST—his difficulties reassert themselves, and he makes a journey to London to lay them before a well-known authority, eminent for his piety, his learning and his self-denial.

2. "Where," he begins, "is the witness of the Church of England of which I have heard so much? I understood that she spoke clearly on disputed points; and it certainly appears to me that she is clear enough on these matters which puzzle me—at least her prayer-book is explicit. How, then, is it possible that her ministers are not silenced when they denounce the faith she proposes to our belief?"

The clergyman smiled.

"You are on the wrong lines, sir," he answered. "You must not take a narrow insular view of the Church of England. She is not an individual, she is but a member of a body; or, in technical language, she consists here of two provinces of the Catholic Church. I am a priest, and you a

layman, of the Catholic Church as a whole. It is to that that we must look for guidance. As you say, the provinces in this island are sufficiently orthodox in the formularies which they use to allow us to be in communion with them; but it is to the Undivided Church, supernaturally one all over the world, that we owe allegiance."

John inquires whether the Church of Rome is part of the Catholic Church, and is informed that it is—and by far the most important part; she is bolder in her confessions of faith—possibly even too bold in her detailed treatment of certain doctrines; but, at any rate, far more efficient in her proclamation of them. It is her ceremonial that should be the guide of English clergy; her devotional and theological books that they should study. In one point only is she certainly unorthodox, and that is in her claim that all must of necessity pay their allegiance to the Pope of Rome.

John passes over this last point, for it is strange to him; and recurs once more to his difficulty with regard to the sermons he has just heard.

"My dear sir," answers his friend, "you cannot be more grieved than I am; but I assure you that it is comparatively unimportant. Hold fast to the fact that you are a Catholic, incorporated and sustained in

the Church's supernatural life by CHRIST's own sacraments. The gates of hell cannot prevail against her. Remember that you have been set here by GOD's providence to defend a difficult outpost; maintain your own personal faith and courage by frequenting those same sacraments; and look for guidance, not to the conflicting cries of individual preachers, but to the voice of GOD Himself, proclaiming, through the mouth of the whole Catholic Church, the truths of revelation."

Once more John is uplifted and helped by such words, and returns home confident in his position, and inspired by the thought that he is a Catholic in a larger sense than he had dreamed, set by GOD in an honourable and difficult post.

3. The following summer he takes his family to France, and, as he has been directed to do by his adviser, attends Mass in the Roman Catholic church. But he is not content with this: since he is a Catholic, he has right to sacraments here as in England, and on Saturday evening presents himself at the confessional.

Before he has uttered many sentences, the priest's voice demands whether he is a Catholic. John, after a moment's hesitation, answers in all sincerity that he is; but the

priest is not satisfied: Is he a Roman Catholic? Is he in communion with the Pope of Rome?

No, answers John; he is an English Catholic, in communion with Canterbury and York; he is a member of that branch which God has established in England.

The priest, understanding his good faith, explains to him gently that he is unable to give him absolution; this Englishman is not a Catholic in the Catholic sense of the word; and, on being pressed, confesses that no Catholic priest in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Mexico—not in the whole world, can give absolution to any man who is not under obedience to, and in open communion with, the Pope of Rome; and John, after protesting against these uncatholic terms of communion, leaves the church.

He has discovered, therefore, by the time that he returns to England that the theory held by his latest spiritual adviser is repudiated by the rest of the Church with which he claims a supernatural union, and he pays him a visit to demand a further explanation.

It is then that he receives a full exposition of what has been called "geographical Christianity."

The Church, he is informed once more, is in many lands. In England its lawful member is called the Church of England;

in France, it is the Church of France, though incidentally united to the see of Rome. Yet it is the same Church here as there; the same faith, the same sacraments.

"How is it the same faith?" asks John, "when in France Catholics believe that union with the Pope is essential and in England they do not?"

"That is not a vital point," answers his friend; "the Roman Catholics have added to the faith in that matter. We must agree to differ."

A memory comes up like an echo from the past. Has not John heard that talk before? Was it not precisely that which his undenominational acquaintances said of such things as Baptism and Communion? And is it any more possible to say of this, than of those, that it is not vital?

"Then who is to decide?" he cried.

"The Catholic Church," answered the clergyman.

"But that is begging the question," answered John, in a flash of illumination. "It is precisely that which has to be decided: the point is, what is the Catholic Church? For I see the necessity of having one!"

The clergyman smiled again.

"It is a matter of faith," he said,—"of conviction."

But John interrupted him.

"Will you tell me," he said, "a little about the Roman Catholics? I feel bound to ask that."

When John went away that evening, he was more puzzled than ever. It seemed that the Roman Catholics were dangerous people; their priests not altogether trustworthy; their people unintellectual and uncultured. It appeared, too, that there was something which his friend called "glamour" about them, in spite of his admiration for them. Men were dazzled and stupefied by their worship, the atmosphere of their churches, the splendour of their ritual.

And yet he felt that he could not but inquire.

First, it was impossible to treat them like a small sect. There were between five and six millions of them in England, and about two hundred and fifty millions of them in the whole world.

Secondly, it appeared that they were of a startling unanimity in the matters of faith—so startling that it was called "rigid and iron uniformity," and that, in spite of the fact that they consisted of every race, nation, character, language and colour under the sun. Schools of thought seemed practically non-existent. And John was weary by now of being told that flat

contradictions were but aspects of one truth.

Thirdly, it seemed to John that if authority did not lie here, it lay nowhere.

"It may be all true," he said to himself, "all that I have heard to-night. It may be that they have added to the faith, that they are untrustworthy, falsifiers of history, persecutors, implacable, schismatic. I know that I do not like their customs, their mumblings of the Communion service, their innumerable ceremonies, their formalism, their irreverence, the appearance of their priests, the dirt in their churches. I do not like them at all. Yet I cannot neglect to inquire what they have to say for themselves. It certainly seems to me that they claim monstrous privileges for their Pope; in fact they seem to set him on the very throne of GOD, as St Paul said they would.* Yet it seems to me also that, so far as I have inquired, there is no help anywhere else. I have found the Bible insufficient as a dogmatic treatise; and the undenominationalists deceptive in their claim to interpret it. The Church of England bears no clearer witness, for she has no living voice to expound the meaning of her own formularies when they are dis-

* 2 Thess. ii, 3, 4.

puted by her ministers—or, at any rate, she does not raise it.

"Geographical Christianity is simply incomprehensible to me. I am no scholar, it is true, but yet I believe that CHRIST came to teach me truth as well as to scholars. I do not understand how what is Catholic in France is heretical in England. And, therefore, it appears to me that unless there is somewhere an authority commissioned by GOD to tell me what to do and believe, an authority which can silence her servants when they attack her pronouncements, an authority which possesses and uses her voice to answer new fancies or corroborate new discoveries—unless there is this somewhere, the Christian religion appears to me to be little less than mockery. I am bidden to believe, but am not informed by GOD what to believe.

"I must, therefore, look into this new matter; I must read the Gospels again with the Roman claims in my mind; I cannot set aside two hundred and fifty millions of Christians who are united, when my friends are disunited, as unworthy of attention.

"Lastly, also, it is of course just barely possible—though exceedingly unlikely—that there is more in these claims than I have hitherto been led to believe. *Just possibly they may be true!*"

II—Roman Catholic Characteristics

(i)

"I WILL begin," says John, "in studying the life of JESUS CHRIST as described in the Gospels. I cannot explain on what authority I receive these Gospels as trustworthy, but I must begin somewhere, and I will assume that they are true. At any rate they touch me more profoundly than anything I have ever read."

Here then are a few of the points that he notices in his course of reading.

First, his attention is arrested by the tone of authority in which CHRIST speaks.

Here was one who came as a teacher and prophet to a nation specially favoured by GOD—a nation which had received a law at any rate far in advance of the law of any other nation in its high standard, its appeal to the heart, its sense of the Divine. CHRIST acknowledged all this; He spoke unmistakably of the salvation to be found among the Jews;* He conformed Himself to the requirements of that law.†

Yet He appears to have set Himself, with what must have appeared nothing less than brutality to some of those who heard Him,

* John iv, 22. † John v, 1; Matt. xvii, 27.

to trample deliberately on sacred traditions, holy prejudices, authorized interpretations, and even parts of the law itself.

"It was said by them of old time," He said, "yet *I say unto you. . .*"* He denounced small pieties, ineffective aspirations—"Not every one that saith . . . LORD, LORD shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."† When His disciples, thinking to please Him, pointed reverently to the glorious temple of the King of heaven, He cried out that not one stone of it should be left upon another.‡ While with one breath He indicated the Scribes and Pharisees as ruling with the authority of Moses,§ with another He denounced woe to them, named them hypocrites and deceivers,‖ and bade His friends beware of their doctrine.¶ He, as it seemed almost parenthetically, struck with a biting sentence or two at the whole scheme of Sabbath-keeping,** matured through centuries, and all designed to the honour of GOD and repose of men.

His methods then were utterly dissimilar from those that had worked so well and for so long. He taught not as the Scribes.†† Instead of appealing to this Rabbi or that,

* Matt. v, 27, 28.
† Matt. vii, 21.
‡ Matt. xxiv, 1, 2.
§ Matt. xxiii, 2.
‖ Matt. xxiii, 14.
¶ Matt. xvi, 11.
** Mark ii, 27.
†† Mark i, 22.

as was the custom of the schools, weighing the evidence of one commentator against another, showing what was of faith, what of opinion, and what for liberty, He spoke now serenely, now sternly, but always as with personal and final authority; and it was this characteristic of imperiousness that was especially marked by those who heard Him. "[*They*] *were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.*"*

Such peremptory methods did not make for peace, any more than the doctrine which He declared; and He Himself confessed frankly that it was so. "I came," He said expressly, "not to send peace, but a sword."† "I came," He said implicitly in a splendid paradox, "not to unite men but to divide them. The sword of My word shall come down between husband and wife, mother and child. Families shall be wrecked through My Gospel, friends estranged, love-ties severed. Not peace; but a sword."‡

When John had arrived at this point in his meditations, the irresistible parallel struck him. Was not all this precisely what is alleged against the divine claims of the Church of Rome?

All other denominations with which he

* Matt. vii, 28, 29. † Matt. x, 34.
‡ Matt. x, 35-37.

has come into contact lay claim to what is called charity and sweet reasonableness. The Wesleyan and the Baptist vie with one another in proclaiming that truth is not vital, that every man must follow his own conscience, that no man may either deliver or contradict his brother. The Church of England rejoices in her own comprehensiveness, cries out that she is National and therefore must truly represent the mind of the nation, holds out liberty of thought within wide limits as her glory and her pride. It is true, reflects John, that there are men within her who do not, but so long as others are permitted to contradict them, and to hold opposing views, the Church of England so far as she has a voice supports these and not those. It is her desire to support as far as may be the law of the land (in itself an estimable ambition); but she carries this so far as still to include among her bishops those who openly instruct their clergy that when the laws of Church and State clash, it is the latter that must be obeyed; for the Church of England is by law established.

John places in contrast with this wide spirit of liberty the accusations cast against the Church of Rome; and they are accusations undoubtedly true in substance.

She teaches "not as the scribes."

"I will have no schools of thought," she cries, "within my pale on matters that have come under my attention. Theologians may dispute and argue and deduce—it is their function to do so; but when I speak, they must be silent or go out. It was said by them of old time—this or that was allowed in the Primitive Church—I dare say it was; but that was of old time. Now, *I say unto you.* I claim to be alive, not dead or entranced; I claim therefore the right to enlarge and amplify my statements on matters of doctrine, to reverse, if need be to elaborate, my decisions on discipline. More than this, the life that inspires me is divine; it is that same energy that burned in my LORD, and it is in His tones that I speak, and with His authority that I define. GOD has promulgated His commandments on Sinai and the Mount of Beatitudes; I add to those my precepts, and all alike bind the conscience of those that hear.

"I am here to declare GOD's truth to men, not to reassure them that there is no such thing, or to content them with a vague and shifting creed or a declaration that a lack of precise thinking is the highest mental liberty. But I am here to tell them truth; for it is the truth and not doubt or hesitation or indifference that makes them free.*

* Cf. John viii, 32.

"On matters that touch morality I am ready, if need be, to contradict with the utmost emphasis merely human enactments. It is said by them that sit in Parliament, A divorced man may marry a new wife. I say unto you, He may not: and I deny my sacraments to those who prefer man to me in the matter. You tell me that common sense demands that an innocent woman wedded to a brute should not be cut off from domestic happiness. I do not care what common sense says; I declare before God that (brute or saint) she is a wedded woman till death steps in to free her. You tell me that I am cruel; that I bring ruin into families wherever I go, that I divide mother and daughter, father and son, that I am authoritative, imperious and domineering. I answer that I come to bring not peace but a sword; that my children have found and always will find that their foes are those of their own household, that I am authoritative and imperious, as my Lord was; for I speak not as other men, not as human legislators and politicians who prefer peace to truth, not as scribes who weigh opinion against opinion, but as the organ of the Supreme Voice, and the authorized interpreter of the Divine Will."

It is too much for John, and he passes to a second point.

2. A train of thought has been suggested to him by CHRIST'S words that although He was going to the Father,* yet He would still be with His own until the end of the world.†

"Let us picture," says John, "what would have happened if these words were carnally fulfilled, and CHRIST were still on the earth in bodily form. We shall understand better so what is the effect of His spiritual presence; for His spiritual presence, unconfined by laws of space, cannot at any rate be less effectual than would have been His earthly presence in Jerusalem or Rome."

First then, with reference to truth, he meditates, how simple would have been the appeal! When disputes arose, on vital matters at any rate, they could have been settled within a few days.

"Tell us," he imagines a deputation saying, "tell us, LORD, what is the meaning of Thy words, 'This is My Body.'‡ There are some of us that are inclined to hold that the words are literal, and that in the holy Sacrament we have Thy Body actually and really present upon our altars. Others of us, who claim equal piety and learning, declare that such a thing is impossible, that

* John xvi, 28. † Matt. xxviii, 20.
‡ Matt. xxvi, 26.

the significance can be no more than a symbolical one; others again name the presence virtual, not real; others declare that the presence is real to the receiver, not in the bread. From this divergence there are countless quarrels, disputes and recriminations. We confess with shame that the sacrament of unity has been for many amongst us a sacrament of discord and hatred.

"Now can it be doubted," John asks himself, "that an answer would have been given?

"Well, it is only an imagination. JESUS CHRIST is not here to decide the matter and interpret His own dark saying. I go to this and that teacher, and each tells me the same; it is a mysterious saying; it is not right to go beyond the words of Scripture; it must be left as He left it; the truth is to be found not in theology, but in the loving spirit that tastes and finds that the Lord is gracious: I must be content—yes, all teachers tell me this, but one. There is one who is not content so to leave it, and who claims with awful arrogance to define the LORD'S own words in the terms of a questionable human philosophy. She sweeps aside Zwinglians, Calvinists, Lutherans and the rest; and tells me expressly that the substance of the bread is changed into the substance of the Body of the

LORD; she adds that where the Body is there must be the Blood, and since CHRIST is alive and undivided, where His Body is must be His Soul and His Divinity. She names for the theologians these two doctrines, *Transubstantiation* and *Concomitance*, and she bids me, who am a simple layman, worship GOD and Man, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity really actually and literally present upon her altars."

John turns to his Bible again, grieved at the audacity, and once more he reads: "*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*"*

He remains a moment staring at the page as the thought develops.

"If then He is here, my imagination is no imagination, but a fact. He is here, to decide these questions, to give peace to troubled minds, to interpret His own dark sayings! Where then shall I find Him? In England where I am put off with an evasion—amongst those who repudiate any power to lay upon men's consciences a greater burden than Scripture: in other words, who refuse to enlighten the intolerable burden of an obscure and vital text? Or shall I find Him among those who alone are not afraid to express the meaning of the text in intelligible language, who do not shrink from

* Matt. xxviii, 20.

catching up a philosophy for the purpose of further illumination, who, in other words claim to speak on the authority of Him who first uttered the dark saying, and to answer men, after CHRIST's own method, as they can understand it?

Is not, therefore, the denial of a power to amplify His words, a denial of the continuous presence that He promised?"

(ii)

A reaction of course, or rather a series of them, is always to be found in every soul that is making any advance in the intellectual region; there are moments when the reason, exhausted, allows itself to be dominated once more by the imagination which surges up from the realm of prejudices, old faiths, old customs, ideas implanted in childhood or overheard and assimilated; and for a time asserts itself fiercely.

I propose to treat here of four such typical assaults which took place at various times in John's mind. The first was named "*Universal Distrust.*"

1. "Why is it," he asked himself, "that the whole world is so leagued against the Roman Catholics? After all, the common sense of the world is a divine instinct, because it is so intensely human. I do not mean the common sense of notoriously bad people, of atheists, immoral, outlaws; but the sober feeling of God-fearing nations. In England, for example, this distrust is no less obvious than it was in Elizabeth's reign, although it takes a less vivid form. A man applies for a situation; his testimonials are satisfactory, and all goes well until his religion is discovered to be of this denomination. After that he is told that he

need not present himself again. A young man wins a scholarship, and the Fellows of the college on learning of his faith, strain every nerve to get rid of him. A Roman priest walking harmlessly down the street is pointed out and eyed as if he were carrying an infernal machine in his tail pocket. A convert is treated among his friends as if he were newly come from a lunatic asylum; he is either humoured or contradicted on every possible occasion. In France there is no need to give illustrations beyond mentioning that that country has taken down the cross from the Pantheon for the third or fourth time, and the crucifix from her law-courts; she has been compelled to get rid of thousands of her citizens for no crime but that of their religion; she is contemplating making the wearing of the clerical or religious habit in public an act of rebellion. Spain, where the Roman Church still holds sway, is despised by the entire civilized world. Italy is full of confiscated monasteries, and the Pope is a sort of prisoner in his own house and grounds. Ireland, as is well known, is the one sore spot in the British Empire."

He turns once more to the Gospels and Acts, and is confronted by the following remarks: "*Ye shall be hated of all men.*"*

* Mark xiii, 13.

That certainly cannot be applied to any denomination other than the Roman Catholic. And there is no exception made as to who shall hate. It is not the atheists, outlaws, adulterers who shall hate; on the contrary it is the reproach of the Roman Catholics as it was of CHRIST Himself, that she is the friend of sinners, and therefore presumably the abettor of sin. "All men" includes just those persons of whom John has been thinking—the sober, GOD-fearing, civilized inhabitants of the world; in fact, CHRIST Himself, amplifying His warning, declares that the enemies of His friends shall bring them before religious and civil courts and shall believe their own hostility to be an act of service to GOD.

"*If ye were of the world, the world should love its own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*"*

The world—that is to say once more, the embodiment of the common-sense, practicable, reasonable, civilized spirit. It was this that called the Apostles mad and drunk, that named them upsetters of the world, seditious, disloyal, godless; it was this that accused their children a century later of nameless crimes in the dark, of impiety and atheism. And it is precisely this spirit to-day that in England distrusts

* John xv, 19

Roman priests, denounces the Roman system, despises converts; that in France has torn down the crucifix, that smiles pityingly at Spain and Ireland, and would if it could drown them in the meshes of its own broad liberty.

2. John revolts at his own reflections.

"This is very well," he cries, "but how useless to pretend that these papists are hated because of their piety—because of their love for JESUS CHRIST! It is their sin, their inconsistency with their own standards, and not their holiness that brings them under suspicion. No amount of rhetoric can whitewash Xystus III, Innocent VIII, Julius II, Mary Tudor, Torquemada and the thousands of criminals known to history. '*Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?*'* It is useless for persecutors to pose as persecuted, for slanderers as calumniated. It is not persecution for society to defend herself against those who subvert the laws of her life. If any proof is wanting that the Roman Church is not the kingdom of heaven, it is found in the character of her citizens."

"*The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net.*" †

"It is not therefore," answers the second voice in his soul, "it is not a select society

* Matt. vii, 16. † Matt. xiii, 47.

of perfected souls; it is rather a huge vessel that sweeps into itself good and bad, saints and sinners, ethereal souls and deformed monsters of carnality. To point to outcasts of society within the Church's borders is no more than to demonstrate that the charity of God is larger than the charity of man. To conceive of the Church as other than this is to deny her catholicity, her divinity, her adequacy to human needs, her bottomless love, her imperishable hope. It was this that was done by the Lollards, the Lutherans, the Independents, the Marcionites, and a hundred Gnostic sects whose names are almost forgotten in consequence. They were for ever crying, 'Come out of her, my people.'* But the kingdom of heaven is not an aristocracy of saintliness, or an exhibition of prize souls; it is not even a sieve which separates; it is a net which gathers and includes.

"Even if all historians' exaggerations were literally true, it would not affect the Church's claim by the weight of a hair; for it is frankly acknowledged that the higher the elevation, the deeper the fall. A bad Catholic is the worst of men; for his type and his leader is no other than Judas Iscariot. The corruption of a highly developed organism is infinitely

* Rev. xviii, 4.

fouler than the decaying remnant of a jelly-fish. If truth is desired and not a verbal victory *coram populo*, you must set St Francis of Assisi beside Innocent VIII, St Catherine of Siena beside the papal court before whom she spoke; you must set the thousands of saints known and unknown beside the thousands of sinners whose names have been raked together for so many centuries and with such scrupulous zeal by the Accuser of the Brethren."

3. "That too is a pretty bit of pleading," says John. "But how then is it possible to defend, not the exceptional sinners, but the frauds daily and hourly carried on in the name of religion? We have heard of the Rood of Boxley and the priest who pulled the string to make the image of his Saviour weep fraudulent tears of blood; of St Januarius, whose blood is still supposed to liquefy four times a year in the hands of the Archbishop of Naples; of the hysterical girls at Lourdes cured either by the violence of their emotions or by a possibly medicinal virtue in the water of the Virgin's Well.

"What of saints who rose three miles above the surface of the earth, of martyrs before whom the beasts crouched in adoration, of bishops who cure the sick, of priests who raise the dead, of *ecstatice* who bleed

from hands and feet and side every Friday in the year from twelve to three, and rave in Hebrew and Greek; of lunatics who shrink and cry out at the touch of a little salt water over which a sinful man has murmured a few words of Latin!

"Is there any other body of Christians in Christendom which still believes in present-day miracles? The president of the Wesleyan Conference does not read out among his statistics a list of miracles wrought by local preachers. The entire common sense of the most reasonable and pious people of the time is unanimous on the fact that miracles were indeed necessary for the establishment of the Church on earth, but have now passed away with the demand for them from a world that has its eyes fixed on higher and more spiritual manifestations of God's power. 'Tis this one intolerable and intolerant body that calls itself the Catholic Church that persists in the face of reason, experience and science, in declaring that the age of miracles is not past. We must not blame her overmuch; she is still burdened by the dark heritage of the middle ages, and her claim to be identical with the credulous and priest-ridden institution that obscured men's minds and dominated them by a mixture of credulity and fraud.

"It is this one Church ——" and John paused in his declamation.

"'*These signs shall follow them that believe: in My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*'*

. . . . . .

"Is it conceivable, then," asked John of himself after a pause, "that I have been a little hasty in concluding that, because some knaves have been detected, therefore all men are dishonest; that I have been guilty of unjustifiable *a priori* reasoning, and have concluded against all miracles from the premisses that they did not happen?"

3. "We must take a larger view," he cried; "this by-lane warfare is useless. Look at the Roman body as a whole once more—its iron system, its artificial uniformity; that crushes out individuality, that forces catch-words into men's mouths, the same holy expression on their faces, and the same barbaric vestments on their shoulders. It is a superb instance of human genius and patience; it is like the drill of an army, the movement of a vast machine: this crank turns this wheel and that lever.

* Mark xvi, 17, 18.

Of course it is imposing and terrifying, until one learns the secret. But how utterly unlike to the free, pure, spiritual union of CHRIST and His simple servants, the union of charity and hearts and wills, the union that is divine because it is deep! Let me look again at the Gospels."

"'*That they all may be one . . . that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me*'* "'*The world*,'" repeats the second voice in his soul. "And you, John, in spite of your plain common sense, are perpetually thinking of the scholar and the saint. What have you to do with them? It was not to them that CHRIST made His vast appeal; but to the weary, the heavy-laden, the sinners, the dull, the unimaginative. His royal road is for the wayfarers and fools who walk there among the redeemed to Zion;† it is for you, John, and such as you, that He made that road and built His heavenly city, not for the scholar who spins webs and rejoices in his elaborateness, but for the man who can become little as a little child. It was for the simple that He set up His sign-posts and built His straight walls.

"In other words, this unity for which He prayed was exactly that which you have been condemning. It was to be a

* John xvii, 21. † Cf. Isa. xxxv, 8-10.

unity which the world might recognize—which was to be obvious, plain, notorious, evident; not a unity visible only to the eyes of seers, still less a unity fashioned out of the weaving of dreams and desires in a study-chair.

"Does the world acknowledge the unity of Baptists, Wesleyans and Plymouth Brethren; or the unity of the Church of England? Is not parliament at this moment seeking to remove the scandal of her disunity? Are not the divisions of Christendom—apart from what you call the Church of Rome—the one supreme stumbling-block to the evangelization of the world which CHRIST desired so passionately? And is it not to the Church of Rome (and because of her iron uniformity, at which you have just been sneering) that the anxious, puzzled wanderer looks with approval, if not with hope? Can you, in fact, point to any unity but hers that arrests for an instant the attention of the irreligious, the careless, and the independent? The world may hate that unity—it has taught you a number of phrases to throw at it—it may explain it away, as you have done; but there is no sort of question but that it acknowledges it to be the most startling and arresting fact in Christendom.

"Look at that sentence again: *That they may be one—that the world may know?* . . ."

John is silenced; but he is not convinced. There are fifty questions yet to be answered; his whole soul revolts against the conclusion. Yet for the present he is silenced.

For he has learnt that precisely those things which had served him hitherto against those intolerable claims of what he prefers to call the "Italian Mission" are the very points which she puts forward as her credentials.

She is authoritative? Yes; because her Master was.

She despises conventions, contradicts human laws, divides families? Yes; because her Master did.

She turns the accusation of supplanting CHRIST into a claim to possess Him in her heart, mind and mouth.

She welcomes the distrust of the world; because He said that it would be so.

She is not afraid to gather up sinners and keep them, even though they pervert her policy and misrepresent her spirit; because it is her function to sweep humanity —dregs and all—into her net.

She is not ashamed to count miracles among her jewels; because He said that His Bride should wear them.

She rejoices in her self-control, the rigi-

dity of her attitude, the subordination of every member of her being to her supreme will; because it is at His wish that it is so, that the world, whom He loves and for whom He gave Himself, may recognize her as His queen, and Himself as King.

John therefore is a little thoughtful as he closes the Gospels.

III—The Petrine Claims

(i)

JOHN'S next important act is to buy a penny Catechism. He has seen what the Gospels say about the Church, and he now desires to see what the Church says about the Gospels.

He is bewildered as he turns the pages. On this he learns that the Catholic Church does not pray to relics; on this he reads what he conceives to be a wilful mistranslation of the apostle James; on that he perceives that the Roman Catholics are not forbidden a knowledge of the Ten Commandments, although they arrange them in a curious and suspicious manner. Then once more he reminds himself that he has not bought the Catechism in order to study secondary matters or to criticize, but to learn what it is that the Roman Church says about itself and its constitution.

He turns therefore to the Apostles' Creed, and finally settles upon question eighty-seven.

"*Why is the Bishop of Rome the Head of the Church?*

"*The Bishop of Rome is the Head of the*

Church because he is the successor of St Peter, whom CHRIST *appointed to be the Head of the Church.*"

"Now here," says John, "is the root of the whole matter. I understand clearly that there must be a Church, if the Revelation of GOD is to be intelligible. Here then is a plain statement. It may be true or untrue—I suspect it to be untrue. If it is untrue, I need look no further; and if it is true, I need look no further. If it is untrue, I may as well stop where I am and get along as I best can, for I certainly cannot join a Church that is based on falsehood. If it is true, I cannot possibly stop where I am. It is absurd to say that I can be a member of the Church, if I am not in subordination to and in communion with its head. Everything else is secondary to this—Anglican Orders, invocation of saints, mariolatry. Here is a clear issue. And now I see that I must turn to the New Testament once more, examine the texts quoted in this Catechism, and see what I can make of them."

Once more therefore he lays his Bible open, provides himself with pen, ink and paper, and begins his study.

It would occupy us far too long if we were to examine all the notes that John

makes on the subject (although I append them at the conclusion of this book). Some of them are perhaps, too, a little fantastic; they would be certainly fantastic if they stood without support. In all, they amount to twenty-nine arguments in support of the statement of the Catechism; but, in brief summary, they amount to this:

Simon Peter plainly has some sort of leadership among the apostles. His name occurs first in all lists of the apostolic College,* and in one passage the very word "first" is used of him,† although he was not the first called, nor the one expressly distinguished by being "the disciple whom JESUS loved."‡ He is treated as the spokesman of the rest by the Jews;§ he heads every deputation to the Master,‖ he opens debates,¶ he utters the first anathema after Pentecost,** he works the first Church miracle,†† he preaches the first sermon.‡‡

"Yes, yes," says John, "he was born a leader of men: he was naturally ardent, strong, enthusiastic, influential. Those arguments prove nothing more than this. Let me examine moreover particularly the

* Matt. x, 2; Mark iii, 16; Luke vi, 14; Acts i, 13.
† Matt. x, 2. ‡ John xxi, 20.
§ Matt. xvii, 24. ‖ Mark i, 36; Luke ix, 33, etc.
¶ Acts xv, 7-11; xi, 4, etc. ** Acts v, 3, 4.
†† Acts iii, 6, 7. ‡‡ Acts ii, 14.

texts on which the Papists lay such especial stress. They are of a rather more remarkable nature than the others."

1. "*Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation a stone . . .*"*

"Now this," reflects John, "does not really prove anything. We know that it was our LORD's custom to give names to His apostles; for example, He called James and John 'Boanerges,' or 'Sons of Thunder,' because of their hot, wrathful spirit.† Peter then was so-called because he was of a strong, unyielding temperament. The Gospels will give no doubt abundant proof of this."

John therefore examines the Gospels again, and is completely puzzled. He finds four or five facts recorded there that appear to prove the exact opposite. Peter tries to walk on the water, and fails because his faith is too feeble;‡ he is terrified at the thought of his LORD's sufferings, and is bitterly rebuked for his weakness;§ after swearing that he would sooner die than forsake his Master, and after having been expressly warned on the subject, he three times over denies Him because of

* John i, 42.
† Mark iii, 17.
‡ Matt. xiv, 28-30.
§ Matt. xvi, 21-23.

the jeers of some servant-girls;* after having previously run for his life with the rest from Gethsemane.† In other words, he is an impulsive, ardent, inconstant, weak, vacillating man.

"He might well have been called *Fire*," muses John, "because of his hot zeal; or *Water*, because of his weakness; but *Stone* seems the most singular misapplication of a metaphor that I have ever heard of. Yet CHRIST 'knew what was in man':‡ He read hearts and diagnosed characters as only GOD Almighty can do. I do not understand; this is beyond me."

John bears his puzzle about with him for a while, and gradually some kind of explanation begins to dawn.

There are two kinds of names, he reflects again, given to people: personal and official. For example, at the grammar-school where he was educated there was a boy nicknamed *Cat*, because of his odd eyes and his way of walking. That is perfectly intelligible; it is a personal label. But there are other names that are not personal. The King of Spain is called "His Most Catholic Majesty"; King George II of England, with all his predecessors, since the Reformation at least, and all his suc-

* Matt. xxvi, 34, 35, 69-75. † Matt. xxvi, 56.
‡ John ii, 25.

cessors till the present day, was called in the Church of England Prayer-book a "most religious and gracious king"; King Edward VII is named "Defender of the Faith." Now, there have been kings of Spain who were not "most Catholic"; George II was neither religious nor gracious; Edward VII is certainly not a Defender of the Faith in the sense in which the title was originally bestowed upon the nursing Father of the English Reformation. Yet no one proposes that these names should be expunged or retained according to the personal characters or exploits of those who bear them. They are official, not personal labels.

"Very well," reflects John. "Then if *Peter* is not a personal label fastened upon Simon Bar-jona, must I not consider the possibility whether it is not an official title?"

He turns the pages of the Gospels again.

2. "*Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" *

"What then is the theory of Papist controversialists?" asks John of himself; and in answer he confesses that it is something after this manner:

Simon is Peter, not because he is a stone

* Matt. xvi, 18.

by nature, or even by grace, but because in the inscrutable decrees of GOD he is chosen to be the foundation-stone of an institution which CHRIST names His Church. There is only one Church in Christendom which claims to be built upon that apostle; and that the one whose centre is Rome, where Peter ruled and where his body lies. As for the gates of hell, is there any other institution in Christendom which compares with this for immovability, authority and impressiveness? One was built upon the fire of Luther, another upon the piety of Wesley, another upon the lusts of a king and the independent spirit of a nation. These have stood for varying periods, and not one of them for more than four hundred years. And the rain has descended, and the floods come, and the winds blown and beaten upon these houses;* and the world that looks upon them already mocks at the cracking walls, the tottering pinnacles, the agitated faces of those who look out of the windows, the efforts of those who under-pin and mortar. The "house divided against itself shall not stand";† how much less a house not only divided against itself, but, as well, founded originally upon the sands of men's passions and fancies,

* Cf. Matt. viii, 27. † Matt. xii, 25.

plastered with untempered mortar,* fashioned on other lines than those of the heavenly Architect. Can the piety, the agony, the sincerity of its inhabitants keep a home that has not GOD for its Father?

And as for that other, that has stood for nineteen centuries, even by the confession of its foes—the rain has descended too, a rain of tears and protest and questioning; the floods of revolt have lifted up their voice; whole nations have poured against it, strong nations from the north; the hot winds have stormed from the mouth of hell; the thunder-clouds of men's passionate denunciation and curses have hidden it from the eyes of those who should have been its children; and when the rain has ceased, and the floods ebbed, and the winds lulled, and the clouds passed, it is standing there still, secure from roof to basement, so perfectly polished that enemies have called it unnatural, and friends supernatural; so immovable that men have mocked and called it a prison; so serene that they have proclaimed it must be full of internal strife; so beyond the construction of human art that they have argued that the Man of Sin has surely built it. And it is this house, unfallen and un-

* Cf. Ezec. xiii, 10.

changed, that is built upon a man whose name God called *Rock*.

"A grossly unfair, exaggerated, intemperate defence," muses John indignantly to himself. "These Papist controversialists have a taste for rhetoric, but none for justice. . . But what, exactly, is the answer? . . ."

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(ii)

"*I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*" *

"Now here," says John to himself, "is a very extraordinary sentence. The only text comparable to it is that in which CHRIST gives to all His apostles power to remit and retain sins.† But I cannot honestly set one by the other; for the second is after all only what all bishops and priests claim for themselves. It appears certainly as if to Peter were committed the keys themselves, and to the others only their occasional use. This is a far more emphatic sentence, and addressed to one man only: whatever the others received afterwards, he received also with them; and he seems to receive something more besides by this unique commission. Now this commission, whatever it was, may have died with Peter; it is possible. Let me see first whether there is any one on earth who claims it. If, on the other hand, it was not a personal privilege, but one committed to all the apostles alike, then I shall find many claimants,

* Matt. xvi, 19. † Cf. John xx, 23.

and shall be obliged to attempt a decision between them."

John sets to work to consider; and he finds it a simpler matter than he had thought. He looks round upon the heads of various denominations—the Archbishop of Canterbury, the President of the Congregational Union, General Booth, and the President of the Wesleyan Conference—and in his imagination he puts to them all what he conceives to be a fair, if rhetorical, paraphrase of the passage, in the form of a question.

"Do any of you," he asks, "claim all that this sentence involves? Do you claim to hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven? I will not be put off by a reference to the loosing power of gospel-preaching. If CHRIST had meant that, He would not have used this extraordinarily misleading image. No; I will have a definite answer. Do you claim to unlock or lock heaven at your will with, of course, GOD'S assistance? Do you claim, what is a corollary of this, that all men who wish to enter heaven must, in some sense, make application to you for admittance. In other words, do you claim universal jurisdiction over the entire world, kings, governments, republics? Do you claim then, any of you, that you are lord of the world, father of

princes and kings; that your lightest words require attention, and that your heavier sentences bind the conscience; that heaven and earth move with your movements (for all this is involved, it seems to me, in some sense, in these awful words of CHRIST); that, to sum up plainly, He who has the government upon His shoulder,* has put the insignia of His kingdom into your hands; that He who is Himself the door, † has given you the key?"

John waits, a little excited by his own paraphrase; and then his heart echoes what he knows would be the answer of those he is questioning.

"A thousand times, No! Who is this that speaketh blasphemies? ‡ There is no such power on earth! You are derogating from CHRIST'S honour. It is He who has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers; if He is the door, He is wide open, and His people enter in through Him alone. Men can do no more than point through Him who is the way, § to Him who is the door, for they are both one."

"Even my priests," cries one voice, "can do no more than declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins." And the chorus

* Cf. Isa. ix, 6.
† Cf. John x, 9.
‡ Luke v, 21.
§ Cf. John xiv, 6.

goes on. "But you have said far more than this. You pretend that one man's action is necessary for the bestowal of God's free redemption. You would destroy the freedom of the Gospel; the open access to one Father through Jesus Christ His Son. You are an enemy of Christ if you believe what you say, and a calumniator if you do not, and in either case a destroyer of the liberty of the children of God,* which He purchased for them with His Blood."

"Then this tremendous sentence," answers John in equal indignation, "is no more than rhetoric—a splendid phrase, sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. If that is so, I demand to know why such words were ever used. Does the Wisdom of the Father, of deliberation or carelessness, employ language that promises so much and signifies so little? If there is no claimant—"

"Stop, I claim it."

And John turns to see an old man dressed in white standing on the steps of the altar. Above him is a dome with these words written round it in gigantic letters; and beneath him is the body of the Apostle.

"I claim it. I am an outcast from the world, and a prisoner in my own house. I am a sinful man like him from whom my

* Cf. Rom. xiii, 21.

title is descended. I have passions, weakness and temptations as he had. I have no immunity from sin, no safeguard against falling beyond that which may be found in the mercy of my GOD and the prayers of my people. I may deny my LORD as some say that Liberius did; I may err in my private faith as John XXII did; I may falter, or give an obscure answer as Honorius did. Yet I claim it, and I bear the keys below my triple crown to shew that I bear them in my hand. In the strength of Him who called me Peter, I am not afraid to use them. I may err in all else, but not in that for which I am set here; what I bind is bound in heaven; what I loose is loosed in heaven. For to me it was said through Peter; and though a hundred Popes are gone, Peter stands here still. . . I claim it, I, Pius the Tenth, *alias* Peter. Does any dispute it with me?"

Then the mild voice ceases; the vision fades, and John is left wondering.

(iii)

Once more John turns to the Gospel; and reads how JESUS CHRIST stood one morning on the beach, with His disciples round Him, and His faithless lover at His feet; and how three times He pierced that warm sorrowful heart by a question.

If ever a man has forfeited all claim on his Master's confidence, it is Peter who kneels here now. He has been made a stone, and he has yielded like water. He has received the keys, and he has denied that he knows the door. And in token of this he is called by his old name, which he bore before the net of Galilee was transfigured into the net of GOD'S kingdom: "*Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?*"

And then under a third image three times repeated, mingled with the rebuke, his commission is reaffirmed: "*Feed My lambs. . . Feed My sheep. . . Feed My sheep.*"*

He is made then, John considers, shepherd of souls; guide of wanderers; support of the weary. He is to feed CHRIST'S flock, and gently lead those that are with young. If the words of the Good Shepherd mean anything, they must mean this.

There are others standing by: John

* John xxi, 15-17.

whom "JESUS loved"; James who was the first to die for Him;* Andrew who was the first to be called;† but it is not to this man or that that the LORD speaks; but to one man more faithless than them all.

There are no exceptions to the flock. Not the Jews only from whom he sprang; or the Gentiles to whom he went; or the Romans who were to lead him whither he would not.‡ It is simply CHRIST's lambs, CHRIST's sheep.

"You—the foundation, the porter and the fisherman, who trembled at the onslaught of hell; who ran from your trust at the noise of feet and the glare of torches; who dropped your net and denied three times that you knew Me in Galilee—you are to be the shepherd of those for whom I laid down My life."

Again John demands whether there is any who claims to hold the crook of universal jurisdiction.

From Canterbury comes the first answer.

"I do not claim it. I claim it only for those of my own race. In England, Yes, a primacy of jurisdiction; in Ireland, Scotland and America a primacy of honour only. For all CHRIST's flock, No."

* Cf. Acts xii, 2. † Cf. John i, 40.
‡ Cf. John xxi, 18.

"Then this is not said to your Grace," answers John.

From other chairs come more indignant denials.

"I do not claim it," cries a voice in Exeter Hall. "Neither this nor anything like it! Thank God we have done with such tyrannical assumptions. We abolished priestcraft and interference between a man's soul and his Maker when we cut off Laud's head, and threw a stool in Edinburgh. Men are not sheep! Our stern old Puritan ancestors died to prove their manhood; and we their stern posterity are ready to die in the same cause. Your priest-ridden law-courts are filled with our martyrs in that quarrel; in thousands of English homes your suggestion would be scorned. For Englishmen have learned at last that no man has a right to dictate to them the terms of salvation or the clauses of GOD's redemptive contract. We owe no allegiance to either foreign or home prelates—to none but GOD speaking in the conscience. We are free, sturdy, self-reliant, Bible-nurtured, determined British citizens; ready to answer to our Maker for what we do and believe. We leave tyranny and catechisms and creeds, together with incense, idolatry and superstition to those benighted Papists and Ritualists still labouring under the

medieval yoke which we have cast off for ever. We are men, not sheep. How dare you call us that?"

John turns away.

"This may be worldly wisdom," he says, "but not divine. It was not so that the Good Shepherd spoke. Men are sheep, of whom I am the weakest and most foolish. See how they follow one another through the hedges that GOD'S law has planted; how when vice is a fashion it ceases to be vice; how they drink of poisoned waters and eat deadly food; how they follow beaten tracks and think that they have found out a road for themselves; how confident when they think themselves alone; how helpless when they fall!

"Surely they need care and tenderness and guidance and chastisement. Did not the Good Shepherd say so? And is there no one who will give it them? Is there no one who will cease to flatter, and will tell them their foolishness; who will lead them to green pastures and make them to lie down by waters of comfort; who will cry to them when the wolf is coming; who will seek and save that which is lost?* And above all, is there no one who will tell them that they are one flock, not many—that there is "neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian, Scy-

* Cf. John x, 1-16.

thian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all"*—who will gather them when they are scattered in the cloudy and dark day,† and call to them with a voice that they know—that there may be, as CHRIST Himself said, one fold and one shepherd.‡

And again that humble voice comes from Rome:

"Yes, I claim all this; for I am Peter, shepherd of Christians and vicar of CHRIST. It was to me that CHRIST said long ago in Galilee, '*Feed My lambs . . . feed My sheep.*' That voice is still in my ears, and I am not ashamed to obey it. When men flatter men, I am not ashamed to call them sheep and treat them so. When men talk of freedom and energy, I tell them that obedience is better still. I am not ashamed to call this food bad, and to bid all that will hear me not to approach it; and that good, and encourage them to feed upon it. I appeal both by love and wrath—by crook and staff. I draw this frightened creature towards me, and I drive that infected sinner from my flock. I recognize no distinctions of race, colour or birth; they are all CHRIST's sheep, and therefore all are mine. The English and the Indian alike are committed to me, and I rule them with the same rod within the

* Col. iii, 11. † Cf. Ezec. xxxiv, 12-16.
‡ John x, 16.

same hurdles. Other sheep I have—sheep who are not yet of this fold*—and to them I am as zealous as to those that know me. I stretch out my hands all day long, as I have stretched them for centuries, giving the same call as I did a thousand years ago, knowing that one day they too will hear my voice, as my Master promised. And already they are coming back in thousands from the northern hills where their fathers led them. . .

"And I do all this, through the scorn of men and the howling of wolves, and the forgetfulness or ignorance or obstinacy of those that are already mine, because it was the Good Shepherd who set me here and bade me rule.† I am ready to lay down my life for them as He did, and as I have done already myself before Nero, as well as in Clement and Urban and Gregory: for their sake I die daily‡ as Paul did. For I am Peter, waiting till my Master Himself comes back to ask me of the flock, the beautiful flock which He gave into my charge. Is there any who disputes my crook with me? . . ."

John turns away in anguish and longing. He has a hundred questions yet; but he

* John x, 16. † Ezek. xxxiv, 23.
‡ Cf. 1 Cor. xv, 31.

desires as never before to be ruled by one who is not ashamed to rule, and to be guided by one who claims to have the authority. Why! is he not after all, then, CHRIST'S lamb?

But the illusion passes as the chorus of protest breaks out from controversialists.

"My dear sir, have you distinguished properly between *Petros* and *Petra?* Have you studied it in the original Greek? Have you considered that CHRIST spoke in Aramaic, and all the questions that flow from that? . . . Have you consulted Dr So-and-So's writings, and reflected on the example of Mr What's-his-name, who left the fold about which you talk so finely?—he didn't find it all so sweet and peaceful as you pretend; you should hear his stories! . . . Have you had a good long talk with Father Somebody-Else, who is a profound scholar, and has studied these questions far more deeply than you ever could or can study? . . . Have you meditated upon the amazing revival of religious life in England during the last seventy years? . . . What do you make of Honorius, Liberius, and all the rest of the pretended shepherds who give the lie by their own words to their own pretensions? . . . Those texts cannot possibly mean what you seem to think they mean. It is utterly unlike the whole teaching and example of

CHRIST, who taught not by definition, but by parable and metaphor and dark saying. . . . The Church is built not on Peter—the merest controversialist can tell you that—but upon Peter's faith—upon his confession that JESUS was divine; it was only a personal privilege. Or if not that, it was upon the Faith—that is the Incarnation. . . For GOD'S sake put away these faithless thoughts. Or, if you cannot, at least study hard for several years before you presume to form an opinion. And when you have studied, you will be no more competent than before: for surely you will not presume to put yourself in competition with Dr Pusey, or Dr Chalmers, or Robertson of Brighton, or of five hundred others alive at this moment, and five thousand more yet unborn. My dear sir, pause before you commit yourself irrevocably to this appalling piece of intellectual arrogance."

John shakes himself free.

"I am a simple man," he cries, "whom CHRIST came to save. It is utterly and ridiculously impossible that salvation can depend upon profound scholarship. Some of those difficulties you mention I have considered; others I am going to consider; others I am not going to be such a fool as to consider at all, for, as you say, I am incompetent to do so.

"But I do not care if I am incompetent. It was the incompetent that CHRIST came to teach and save. And therefore in vital and fundamental matters, such as the identity of the Catholic Church, I am as capable of deciding as Dr Pusey or Dr Anybody-Else, for their need is no greater than mine.

"CHRIST said that the sheep would know His voice; and that a stranger they would not follow.* Therefore I am going to listen, and I shall be obliged if you will let me alone and give over shouting. Perhaps I may be quite wrong; I don't know yet. But I hear a voice saying, 'Follow Me,' and I must have a little peace and quietness before I can know whether it is the Good Shepherd calling, or whether it is some one imitating His voice.

"Kindly, then, let me alone. I am going to listen, to question my own heart, and to pray."

* Cf. John x, 4, 5.

IV–Development

(i)

THERE is yet one great difficulty to John's mind as he regards the claim of Rome to represent the Catholic Church of CHRIST.

He would express it as follows:

1. "Imagination is as much the gift of GOD as intellect. Now, so far as intellect is concerned, I acknowledge that it is hard to answer the Petrine argument. I understand that, historically, Peter was the first Bishop of Rome, and Pius the last; and I cannot myself answer directly the presumption that Pius has succeeded to the prerogative as well as to the See of Peter; but my imagination, my intuition, my illative sense, steps in and tells me that it is impossible.

"An Anglican said to me the other day that it always seemed to him that if St Paul came back to earth he would find himself at home neither at High Mass in St Peter's nor at Evensong in his own cathedral in London, but in some such place as a Salvation Army shelter. This remark has haunted me. I suppose my friend satisfies himself somehow that, in

spite of his feeling, he is right in worshipping at St Paul's; but I am not sure that I am so easily contented with St Peter's.

"For, place side by side the worship, the dogmatic system, the ecclesiastical organization of the Apostolic Church, with that of the present day, and see how utterly unlike one is to the other.

"Look at that elaborate baldachino, those lights, that tabernacle. Observe those three priests at the altar, their antique dress, of which even the cut is regulated by the rubrics; watch their ordered movements, their gestures and postures; listen to the careful singing, the unreal monotone and minor thirds; notice the silence of the people. The whole affair is certainly stately and impressive; but it is a kind of holy drama, a sacred dance; it is utterly unlike the free spontaneous worship of the Primitive Church.

"Look at St Paul in his upper room; notice his fervent reality, his unfettered eloquence; the ease of the people sitting on the floor and window-seats. Observe the way he takes the bread and wine into his hands; hear the simple words; mark the absence of ceremonial, the bare table, the guttering lamp, and the natural movements of the congregation; now this man prays, now that, as the spirit directs.

"Or put Peter and Pius side by side. Peter, the old weather-beaten fisherman, shuffling along the streets of Rome, going down with his lamp into the catacomb, where the faithful are assembled to hear what he has to say; notice the absence of homage and pomp and circumstance! And then Pius, crowned and robed like a heathen god, going in his *sedia gestatoria*, with cardinals, chamberlains and monsignori in purple and ermine and scarlet before, and the great fans behind; listen to the roars of the people to the pope-king, the shrilling of the silver trumpets; compare the worldly splendour and show of this with the natural Christian simplicity of that!

"Compare the doctrine of this age and that; put the Ethiopian eunuch's confession, 'I believe that JESUS CHRIST is the Son of GOD,'* beside the penny Catechism, with its elaborate statements and deductions and arguments. If the eunuch was a 'good Catholic,' why did he not have to repeat the Creed of Pope Pius V before his baptism? If Mrs So-and-So, received into the Church yesterday, was an apostolic Christian, why was not Philip's demand enough?

"Lastly, put the free movement of the

* Acts viii, 37.

early Church beside the highly organized system of the present day, with its dioceses, vicariates, metropolitan sees, missions; put serious-faced Priscilla beside Sister Mary Joseph Aloysius of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus; plain Timothy beside His Grace the Most Reverend ✠ John Archbishop of Mesopotamia. . .

"It is simply ridiculous to say that these are the same! Did St Peter sit for three hours every Saturday afternoon in a carved oak confessional with his office book, candle, and purple-stoled cotta? Is it possible to conceive Timothy singing Pontifical High Mass in his cathedral church in Crete, and publishing a plenary indulgence on the feast of the Sacred Stigmata of Saint Maria Angela di Sisto on the usual conditions? . . . No, no!

"I am aware that this argument of the imagination strikes as shrewdly at the Church of England as at the Church of Rome—for it is just as hard to imagine Titus singing Evensong on G in Ely Cathedral, or St Bartholomew preaching at harvest festival from a pulpit decked with pumpkins—for the question is (scarcely a question!) Are we not all wrong together? And ought we not to revert honestly to primitive methods if we are going to claim primitive prerogatives?"

Now if John had consulted a theologian, he would have had some facts recalled to his attention which had escaped it. He would have been reminded that, after all, St Peter probably used some of the same words at Mass that Pius uses; that St Paul published an indulgence in his second Epistle to the Corinthians* and heard a large number of spiritualists' confessions at Ephesus; and that the said spiritualists certainly made acts of contrition, confession and satisfaction—for we are expressly told so—and presumably received absolution;† that the homage given to St Peter by the faithful was far in excess of that offered to Pius X, for the shadow of the present Pope has never yet been used for medicinal purposes;‡ that the Ethiopian eunuch underwent a long and careful instruction from the deacon before being admitted to baptism;§ that the differentiation of orders and functions began immediately after Pentecost‖—and so forth.

But John did not consult this theologian.

2. He went for a walk instead on an autumn day; he picked up an acorn and put it in his pocket; he met a child in a peram-

* Cf. 2 Cor. ii, 6-10. † Cf. Acts xix, 18,19.
‡ Cf. Acts v, 15. § Acts viii, 35.
‖ Acts vi, 1-6.

bulator, and he attended some athletic sports. Then he went home again.

Then he took the acorn out of his pocket and began to consider, sitting at his table.

"How remarkable it is," he said to himself, "that so small a thing contains such enormous powers! Normally, if I had not picked this up, it would have sunk into the ground and turned brown; then it would have cracked and put out a white finger. The white finger would have ascended to the light and turned yellow, and then brown again. After a year or so it would have put out one leaf in spring, which would have fallen in the autumn; the next year two leaves, and so on... Even if I put it in the ground now, by the time that Jack's children are old people, there will be an oak large enough to sit under, with branches, leaves and acorns of its own. A crow which would eat this acorn at one mouthful now, could build his nest in fifty years in the tree which it is capable of becoming.

"Or the child that I saw this afternoon, with its dimpled red face, its feeble fingers, its little legs which can kick but not walk, its mouth which can cry but not speak, its will so wholly the slave of circumstance, so pitiably at the mercy of a pin—that child, if it lives, may grow up into an athlete like those I saw at the sports, with arms and

legs of steel, rippling muscles, thin tanned face, a will as tense as a sinew at full stretch. . .

"Now, if the Church of God was like that, I might be able to understand how Peter could become Pius; one sentence, a catechism; Priscilla, Sister Mary Joseph, etc. But then the Church is nothing of the sort. St Paul tells his friend to 'keep the deposit,'* not to add to it; there is in fact an appalling curse in the Book of Revelations against those who do add to God's oracles;† we are bidden to keep the faith once delivered to the saints;‡ and to refuse even an angel from heaven if he should preach another gospel than that which Paul delivered.§ There is not a shadow of evidence"—and at this John began to turn the leaves of his Bible—"not the shadow of evidence that the Church is like an acorn or the body of a child. . ."

In ten minutes John is staring at the following texts:

"*The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown it . . . becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*" ||

* Cf. 1 Tim. vi, 20, etc. † Cf. Rev. xxii, 18.
‡ Cf. Jude 3. § Cf. Gal. i, 8, 9.
|| Matt. xiii, 31, 32.

"*. . . the edifying of the body of* CHRIST, *. . . till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of* GOD, *unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of* CHRIST." *

"But this is extraordinary," exclaims John. "Why has no one ever pointed this out to me before? Why has the *Church Times* always said so much about the 'faith once delivered to the saints,' and so little about these astonishing texts? They change the whole complexion of affairs.

"Here is CHRIST Himself saying, as plainly as words can do it, that the kingdom of heaven will utterly change its appearance from being like a small, round seed, simple in shape and colour and texture, to the semblance of a vast, elaborate, glorious tree, of a thousand surfaces and curves, of innumerable branches, twigs, leaves, fibres and roots; from a seed which a bird can eat, to a tree in which a colony of birds may live.

"Here is St Paul, whom I now remember saying again and again that the Church is the Body of CHRIST,† declaring that Body in his days to be as the body of a child, containing indeed the structure of an athlete, his limbs, his possibilities, but not actually expressing them; and that

* Eph. iv, 12, 13. † Cf. Eph. ii, 16; i, 22, 23, etc.

this Body will be gradually 'edified' in the 'unity'—not 'diversity'—of 'the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of GOD,' until it is full-grown—until it gradually corresponds in fact in its outward appearance and stature with the mind and spirit of CHRIST, which have been in it from the beginning!

"What in the world am I to make of this? . . ."

(ii)

"I see plainly," says John, "that this will take some thinking over. First of all there is the question as to how I can tell whether the Body of CHRIST has grown as was intended; how I can be certain whether it has not become deformed by poison or accident. Certainly that seems to me unlikely, since it is CHRIST'S Body; but it may be possible. I will set that aside, however, for the present, and consider what growth means and involves before I consider the possibility of accident."

1. First, then, he sees that growth and life are practically identical, or, to be strict, life is the principle of growth, and growth the evidence of life. A statue may be more perfect than a body in grace and proportion, yet it does not grow, and therefore is not alive. A walking, talking doll may simulate life, but it is not alive because it is incapable of growth. Therefore, to compare the Church to a body or a seed, and to deny it the power of growth and expansion, is to utter a contradiction in terms; or perhaps it is better to say that to deny growth to the Church is to rob

the metaphors of CHRIST and His apostles of their essential meaning.

"Now," cries John, "is it not a fact that the divines of the Church of England are continually appealing back to the primitive ages? 'Human corruptions,' they say, 'have marred the perfection of the Apostolic Church; articles have been added to the faith by Rome; we must continually be comparing our present system with that of the apostles, and purging it of error. It was this necessity that caused the Reformation, and it is this necessity that still keeps us alert against the insinuation of modern and foreign devotions and beliefs.'

"In other words, for them the Church of CHRIST is a statue carved by the hand of GOD, polished possibly by workmen of the sub-apostolic age, which it is their duty to keep undefiled. Lichens encroach upon it by lapse of time, according to their theory; copes and tiaras, it may be, have been added by human art and ambition; and these must continually be removed. But it is a statue, and not a living body.

"As for the theory that the Church is alive, but reached its full growth about the end of the first, second, fourth or sixth century—that is simply not worth considering. For these are purely arbitrary points, selected by various parties ac-

cording to their own idea of perfection. There is not one single objective reason why any one of these periods should be preferred to any other. It is ridiculous to say that St Paul looked forward to the end of the sixth century as the culmination of the measure of the stature of the fullness of CHRIST. To pretend that he had any such view is indeed to make null the word of GOD by human traditions that have not even common sense to recommend them. Besides, if so, what in the world has it been doing ever since?

"It is as arbitrary as to say that the perfection of a child's growth is reached at the age of fourteen. So long as he continues to grow in strength and stature, so long we must be content to put aside our own views of what perfection should be, and trust GOD's ideal instead."

2. "But how can we know," he next asks himself, "whether it is not growing wrong? I must put aside this main point for the present; but this at least I see—that, granted that it does grow according to GOD's plan, it can never reject what has once been part of its structure.—(In the main I do see that if we cannot trust GOD with the general development of the Church, we cannot trust Him at all. Some say that the physical re-

surrection of CHRIST was an error subsequent to the purity of the Gospel; and I have really no answer except that I cannot believe that such an error would have been permitted, if I take for granted the revelation of GOD through JESUS CHRIST at all.)

"But to return. I understand that development must be along the original lines of the nature of the organism. If an oak, after ten years' growth, suddenly rejected roots and walked out of my garden on legs, I should conclude that I had been mistaken as to its oak-nature. It cannot change the laws of its existence; it may throw out branches, but not hands."

John then reflects that it is the reproach of the Church of Rome that she will not change nor eat her words. Like Pilate, what she has written, she has written. She may expound and amplify her statements; she may make explicit what was once only implicit; but the original statement still stands as a summary of its later amplifications.

But the Church of England and the Nonconformist sects follow a different principle. That branch of the tree that once spread its leaves over England had, without the shadow of a doubt, its roots in Rome.

"I cannot understand," cries John, impatiently, "what Anglicans mean who declare that the Church of Anselm and Augus-

tine was 'not Roman Catholic.' Every bishop consecrated in the fifteenth century swore in the most solemn manner that he drew his spiritual, ecclesiastical and temporal prerogatives from the Pope. The Pope was prayed for in every Mass—until his name was deliberately scratched out by the Reformers; it was to him that the final appeal lay. If the pre-Reformation Church in England was not Roman Catholic, the Church of Spain is not Roman Catholic now; and words cease to bear any meaning!"

He considers then that this collection of Christians, which, in the phrase of some of them, is a branch of the Catholic Church, has developed legs and walked away; or, if they prefer it, has been severed somehow from the roots that still stand, where they always did, in Rome. It certainly does not stand where it did; for it is really foolish to assert that the Church of England stood perfectly still in the sixteenth century, and that the entire remainder of Western Christendom with one consent moved from it. Such a paradox amounts to the statement that the Reformation did not take place in England at all, but that a violent schism rent the rest of Christendom, Rome included, from the Apostolic roots, at precisely the date at which historians place

the hallucination hitherto called the "Reformation!"

"Such a paradox," he reflects, "can only be paralleled by the comment of the Popish priest who sat in the gallery at a Church Defence meeting: 'I understand it at last,' he whispered to a friend; 'the Church of England was Protestant until the Reformation, and has been Catholic ever since!'"

But this is not all. Numerous other points, such as Purgatory with its corollaries of Masses for the dead, the propitiation offered for the quick and the dead by the priest in the Sacrifice of the Mass, invocation of saints, transubstantiation, and so forth, once were parts of the doctrine of the Church of England. Then for a long period these points were not only disbelieved, but loudly assailed by the spiritual descendants of Cranmer and Ridley. Even now, in spite of the Oxford Movement, it is doubtful whether any of the diocesan bishops, or more than one in ten thousand of the laity, believe them now. In brief, then, things that had once been part of the tree, and still are part of what claims to be the only and original tree, were definitely rejected in England as accretions and additions. God then, according to the Anglican theory, has permitted His oak to throw out leaves of hazel (or, shall we say,

deadly nightshade?); He has allowed the mystical Body of His Son, fairer than the children of men,* of whose natural Body not one bone was broken,† to become the distorted body of a cripple and a hunchback; and it is not merely pierced and torn, it is beaten out of all semblance to a man. And, most astounding of all, He has reserved the privilege of pruning His unnatural tree, and making straight the deformed limbs of JESUS CHRIST, to a small section of a small body of Christians towards the close of the nineteenth century. . .

Such, briefly stated, is the claim of those who name themselves Anglo-Catholics: while for the rest of their communion, the metaphor of the tree with all that it involves, is rejected root, branch, leaves, fruit and twig, from beginning to end, from top to bottom.

3. "Yet," he reflects, "there is another serious accusation brought against the Roman Church. What of all those foreign bodies that she has incorporated into her system? What of incense, once offered to heathen emperors? Transubstantiation, a fragment of an exploded human philoso-

* Ps. xlv, 3. † John xix, 36.

phy; canonization, once under the name of deification used for declaring members of the imperial family divine; the Religious life, once practised by the vestals—and all the rest? Have we not here an evident proof that the development theory is impossible and suicidal? Such expansion is not development of an original nature, it is the assimilation of new external things."

"Exactly," cries the Catholic voice in his heart, beginning now to wax louder than ever, "we confess frankly that we assimilate exterior things: but so do the acorn and the child. Those masses of matter did not, literally speaking, reside in the acorn, but they passed through, transfigured from death to life by its energy, from the soil that lay round about. As the acorn has its instinct for what it can assimilate, choosing this chemical and rejecting that pebble; so the divine seed, sown in the world at Pentecost, has ever since been passing through itself those things proper for its growth and expansion. Yet each such substance must, as it were, be cognate to something within the acorn, unhostile to what it will meet with there, for we cannot add to the deposit of faith, we can only express it more fully. With every assimilated particle, as it mounts glorified in the air, there must go the oak-nature

with it that has transformed it. Arius complained that a new phrase was added to the old Creed when CHRIST was called 'of one substance with the Father.' 'You are adding to the faith,' he cried. 'Last year it was enough that I should call JESUS divine, now it seems I must call Him *Homoousios:* it is I, then, who am the old Catholic, it is you who are innovators and heretics.' 'It is not so,' answered the Church. 'I incorporate the Greek word to express myself more fully; as an acorn incorporates earth to declare the glorious life that is hid within itself; as one day I may declare Mary immaculate, and the Pope infallible. First the seed, then the fibre, then the sapling, then the tree.'

"It is my glory then," cries the Church to the amazed ears of John; "it is my glory that I make dead things to live. I take the dead music of the Jews, and it blossoms in flowers of plainsong; I catch up the dying language of a Latin people, and I make it live, when to all others it has been long dead; it thrives in my liturgy, it generates new words in my theology, it glows on the lips of my preachers, it is the tongue in which my foreign priests communicate with me and with one another. At Pentecost the miracle that showed the wisdom of GOD was that men of one language spoke

many;* in the twentieth century after Pentecost my miracle is that men of many languages speak one.

"I sweep up the debased architecture of the Roman Empire, and out of it I build my basilicas. I seize to myself the dying philosophy of Aristotle, and recreate it alive to make my meaning plain. I am ready, as I have always been, to take the ephemeral things of men, their dress, their methods, their modes of thought, and to use them, if it suits my purpose, for the manifestation of my divine life.

"The whole world lies about my roots, and I suck out of every country and age what befits my energy of life.

"For I am more than the oak and the mustard-tree: I am the very Vine of God, brought out of Egypt long ago.† My seed fell in a ball of fire with the sound of wind;‡ and from that moment I have lived indeed. I thrust my white shoots in the darkness of the catacombs, and forced my way through the cracks of Cæsar's falling palaces; my early grapes were trodden under foot, rent by the wild boar in the amphitheatre,§ spoilt by little foxes,‖ crushed in the wine-press of rack and prison; I am

* Cf. Acts ii, 8. † Cf. Ps. lxxx, 8.
‡ Cf. Acts ii, 1-4. § Cf. Ps. lxxx, 13.
‖ Cf. Cant. Cant. ii, 15.

blown upon by every wind that blows, by calumny and criticism from the north, by passion and fury in the south and west. I am pruned year by year with sharp knives forged in death and hell, yet grasped by the hand of the Father who is my husbandman.* And yet I live, and shall live, till my Beloved comes down to taste the fruits of the garden. . . †

"For I am planted by the river of salvation, watered by the tears and blood of saints, breathed upon by the spirit of God who alone can make the spices to flow forth.‡ More than that, I am mystically one with my Beloved already; it is His Heart's blood that flows in my veins; His strength that sustains me; for He is the Vine, my boughs are His branches;§ and I am nothing save in Him and them. It is for this cause then that I spring up indomitable; that I stretch my boughs to the river, and my branches to the sea,‖ that my shadow is in all lands; that the wild birds lodge in my branches, the dove and the eagle together; that the fierce beasts couch beside my roots, the wolf beside the lamb, and the leopard by the kid.¶ It is for

* Cf. John xv, 1.
† Cf. Cant. Cant. vi, 2-11.
‡ Cf. Cant. Cant. iv, 16.
§ Cf. John xv, 5, etc.
‖ Cf. Ps. lxxx, 11.
¶ Cf. Isa. xi, 6.

this that I am older than the centuries, younger than yesterday, eternal, undying and divine."

John shuts his Bible, and falls to prayer.

V–Infallibility

(i)

"IT is very well," says John, "to compare the Catholic Church to a tree, and to explain its apparent changes by development; but the theory has its disadvantages. Chief among these is the risk of wrong development, or deformity. How am I to know whether, for example, Transubstantiation is not a growth upon the Vine, that has no right to be there? How can I tell that the Petrine claims are not of the same nature, and that the Pope, as we see him to-day, is not a kind of tumour upon the mystical body, that has arrogated to itself the functions of a head?"

1. But, as he considers the matter, the probability of deformity appears to him to be at least very unlikely.

As a matter of fact, the Church of Rome is in possession of the world in a way in which no other institution is in possession. It numbers at least half the entire Christian world, and this half is endowed with a unity entirely lacking in the other half. Non-Catholics are united in one point only, namely, in their

denial of the Papacy; Catholics are united not only in their view of the Papacy but in all other points of doctrine as well. This Church also, which John now calls Catholic, has provided saints in quality and quantity such as no other institution has ever produced; it is of all ages, countries and characters; it has a continuity in which its fiercest enemies can point to no breach; and, lastly, these two points which he has advanced as being possible deformities are not merely small external growths which can be detached from the body without injuring its life—they are of its very essence and vitality. As the Papacy is the heart of its doctrinal system, so Transubstantiation is the heart of its devotional life. From both pour out a stream of faith and prayer that reach the furthest fibres of its being. Cut these two things out of the Catholic Church, and the whole body perishes.

If then for the purposes of argument it is granted that these two points are instances of wrong development, John will have to acknowledge that God Almighty, who promised that His Church should not be prevailed against by the gates of hell, has allowed one half of those who call themselves Christians to be fundamently perverted in their dogmatic and devotional life, and the other half to be so internally

divided that they neither reckon themselves nor are reckoned by the world as forming one body at all. According to this view then the Creator of the world, who preserves millions of trees in health and perfection, has allowed His heavenly Vine to be rent by disease and schism; He who brings man's natural stature to health and maturity has permitted the mystical Body of His Son to become as that of a leper and a cripple.

"Yes," answers John to his own thoughts, "I must confess that it appears to me unlikely that Almighty God would allow His Vine to be so poisoned by error. I should have expected of Him that He would have given it some safeguard, some instinct of choosing good and refusing evil,* such as He has given to man's natural life, and even to senseless vegetables which He has enabled to draw out of the soil what is good for their life and to reject what is useless or poisonous. It is this instinct which I understand by the word *infallibility*, that is, an unerring power of distinguishing between what is true and what is not, between what affects doctrinal and devotional life for good or for evil, between what can be healthily incorporated and what must be resolutely refused. But, on the other hand, God does

* Cf. Isa. vii, 15.

not always do what seems likely and probable; His ways are past finding out. Let me consider therefore what are possible alternatives to this endowment of infallibility which the Roman Catholic Church claims for itself."

2. On reflection he finds that they are three in number.

(i) *The infallibility of nobody.*

(ii) *The infallibility of everybody.*

(iii) *The infallibility of some body other than the Roman Catholic Church.*

He considers them one by one.

(i) *The infallibility of nobody.*

The articles of the Church of England state that infallibility is to be found in no one body, and that the Church of Rome has erred, as also have the Churches of Antioch and Jerusalem, even in matters of faith.* Neither does the Church of England apparently believe that infallibility is to be found in all of these acting together, although she pays a great deference, in her words, to what she calls Catholic Doctors. She believes, then, in a general kind of way, in the guidance of antiquity,† but she does not believe in its guaranteed immunity from error.

* Article XIX.

† Cf. Preface to *Book of Common Prayer*, "Concerning the Service of the Church," etc.

John finds himself therefore, so far as he follows her teaching, in the following situation:

Nineteen hundred years ago there lived, it is reported, one called JESUS CHRIST. After His death a number of His admirers wrote His history, relating many marvels and adding comments. These histories were sorted out by a body of persons liable to error (for even general councils, says the Church of England, are so liable*), and summaries called creeds were drawn up by these same fallible authorities. Since those days a thousand further questions have been answered, and a body of doctrine has gradually taken shape under the hands of men unsafeguarded against mistake. To this body of doctrine he is bidden to give his adherence.

Yet what reason has he for doing so? Gradual development is repudiated because of the probability of human error creeping in—the Church of Rome is attacked for that very reason. He is asked therefore to give supernatural faith to the results arrived at by fallible men concerning the life and person of One concerning whom there has ever been enormous controversy, whose history was written by persons whose only claim to authority is

* Article XXI.

the sanction given them by fallible councils, and who Himself lived in the East, an uncritical district in an uncritical age.

What kind of security is there that the account of that Person is to be relied upon, that His words and deeds are truly reported? Why should not those fallible councils have fallen into grievous error, including untrustworthy narratives in their so-called canon of Scripture, and excluding as heretical true comments on that life and Person? Perhaps the Gospel according to St John has no claim to authority! Perhaps the Church of England may be utterly wrong in thinking JESUS CHRIST divine! Perhaps the whole matter is a beautiful delusion from beginning to end!

Yet, even assuming that JESUS was GOD, the state of affairs is not much better; for, according to this theory of the fallibility of everybody, we may have wholly misconstrued the meaning of His words and acts; we are asked to give an unquestioning faith to things distinctly questionable; and JESUS CHRIST who brought us a revelation has provided no means of preserving it unimpaired.

"I may as well," cries John, "give it all up at once, and confess that unless there is somewhere on earth an authority that speaks infallibly, it would have been much better if I had never been tantalized by a

glimpse of a truth which I am unable to apprehend."

(ii) *The infallibility of everybody.*

This, in effect, is the claim of many Protestants. Every man, they say, who has received the gift of faith, and who prayerfully cultivates it, is illuminated from on high with a power of discerning between true and false, and of rightfully understanding the Holy Scriptures.

"Now if," says John, "I am told that the Pope's infallibility is impossible to believe, how can I be expected to think the infallibility of, let us say, two hundred million persons is easier of belief? Is not this straining at a gnat, and swallowing a very large herd of gigantic camels? Besides, these infallible individuals differ diametrically on points of faith. General Booth is certainly a sincere and prayerful man, and he tells me that baptism is an unnecessary piece of ceremonial; while Dr Guinness Rogers urges it as at least very important. The Wesleyans are infallible when they tell me that I am free to choose or refuse GOD; and the Calvinists are infallible when they tell me that I am nothing of the kind. And so forth.

"I am therefore in a worse position than ever; for it is even more bewildering to believe that GOD demands from me faith in a

large number of not only irreconcilable but flatly contradictory propositions, than that He has taken no steps at all to secure the infallible transmission of His revelation in JESUS CHRIST."

(iii) *The infallibility of somebody other than the Roman Catholic Church.*

Now the principal exponents in England of this last alternative are to be found among those whom their enemies call "Ritualists."

Briefly, as John has learnt in the past, the theory is as follows:

The infallible Church of GOD consists of those bodies of Christians, acting together, who hold the old creeds of Christendom and have retained at least the threefold order of ministers, bishops, priests and deacons. Roughly speaking, these may be enumerated as the communions of Rome, Moscow and Canterbury. These three circles, however, are not absolutely coincident; each has its own peculiarities, and it is only in that part where all three overlap that complete security is to be found. For example, all three communions hold, at any rate in their written formularies, such doctrines as those of the Real Presence and the sacrament of Penance* (to mention points of controversy). Other doctrines

* Cf. *Book of Common Prayer,* Catechism, Ordaining of Priests, etc.

such as the sacrifice of the Mass, invocation of saints, and prayers for the dead, while held explicitly by Rome and Moscow, cannot be demonstrated, say the Ritualists, as actually and literally incompatible with the formularies of the Church of England, even though until the last seventy years very nearly all, and at the present moment more than half of her children, following at any rate a possible interpretation of her "Articles," strenuously deny them.*

"But let us waive all these questions," says John, "and take the Ritualistic theory as proved. In what condition does it leave us?

"To my first question, How does this infallible authority—i.e., the agreement between Rome, Moscow and Canterbury—utter her voice? the answer is, For the present she speaks by silent agreement, in the future it is to be hoped that she will speak by a general council.

"Again (waiving the matter of the Twenty-first Article, which expressly states that general councils 'may err, even in things pertaining to God'), I ask: Is there any kind of possibility, humanly speaking, that such a general council will ever be gathered? How is such a council

* Cf. Articles xxii, xxxi, etc.

possible when one of the three partners repudiates the jurisdiction and position of one of the others, and the jurisdiction, position and orders of the third; when the second partner repudiates the first and third altogether; and only a small section of the third partner believes in the theory at all? Is this any more than a paper-theory, that may be maintained for purposes of argument, but which is utterly useless to people like myself, alive at this moment, who want to know what to believe?

"As for the 'silent agreement,' I asked not about silence, but speech. I asked how this infallible authority speaks, not what she may be believed to imply; for implication is an uncertain ground to go upon. I may take one view of what she implies, and you may take another. Where then is the voice that will decide between us? You do not find it in your own bishops, for you do not obey them, but appeal from them back once more to this 'silent agreement,' or to the future speech of a council that you know will never meet. Is not this tangle insoluble? Are we not at the whirling edge of a vicious circle?

"Yet again, I will waive all this and take your theory for granted.

"I understand that you do, as a matter

of fact, base your acceptance of the Real Presence, the sacrament of Penance, and so on, upon this agreement of what you call the Church Diffusive; in fact you base your whole faith upon it. I must ask then a very fundamental question: Does this theory of silent agreement itself find support from what you call the Catholic Church? Do Rome, Moscow and Canterbury accept the positions into which you thrust them? Do they acknowledge that infallible authority resides in the overlapping of their respective tenets, and nowhere else? *For it is impossible to base individual doctrines upon a foundation which is itself repudiated by itself.*"

"I must confess," answers the Ritualist, "that Rome and Moscow, to say nothing of Canterbury, do refuse the theory. Rome arrogantly claims to be the whole of the Catholic Church; Moscow claims to be alone orthodox."

"Then," cries John once more, "I have to accept this theory upon your authority alone. You base your authority upon this theory, and this theory upon your authority. Have you ever heard of the Indian theory of the universe? The world stands on an elephant, the elephant upon a tortoise; and the tortoise, apparently, upon the world!

"My dear sir," continues John to his imaginary Ritualist, "you really must let me alone. I am more bewildered than I can describe. You forget that I am not a scholar like yourself. To my poor brain your theory appears like the dream of a professor who never leaves his college. And yet I am quite aware that you do magnificent work in practical life; that you sacrifice yourself nobly for God's poor, that you teach them uplifting doctrines, and set them an example that we should all do well to follow. But in your theory you are a dreamer; it is a city in the clouds that inspires your journey; it moves before you, changing its shape with every wind that blows; never descending to dwell among men. For myself, I cannot walk in its light; I need a Jerusalem which has God for its architect, and which, though its head reaches to heaven, yet has its foundations and gates upon earth. For the twentieth time, I am a simple man; and with all the good will in the world I cannot honestly believe in a living authority which has undergone petrifaction, in a vine which consists of branches severed one from another, in a speaking voice which is dumb, in a republic which has no president, in a life which offers no proof of its existence. I admire your works, I am astonished at

your ingenuity; but I cannot believe in your theories. I shall be obliged if you will let me alone, and allow me to look at the Penny Catechism once more."

"The Church has a visible Head on earth—the Bishop of Rome, who is the Vicar of CHRIST. He is the shepherd and teacher of all Christians, and he cannot err when, as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, he defines a doctrine concerning faith and morals to be held by the whole Church. . . The Church has marks by which we know her. . . She is one because all her members agree in one faith . . . and are all united under one Head. . . She is distinguished by the eminent holiness of . . . many thousands of her children. . . She subsists in all ages, teaches all nations. . . She holds the doctrines and traditions of the apostles . . . and derives her Orders and Mission from them. . . She cannot err . . . because CHRIST promised that the gates of hell shall never prevail against His Church; that the Holy Ghost shall teach her all things, and that He Himself will be with her . . . even to the consummation of the world."*

"Ah!" he cries, "at least I understand this theory. GOD has not left us comfortless: He has planted His Vine and safe-

* §§ 86-101.

guarded her against error. He has established an authority which speaks with His voice.

"And the whole of my observation confirms the theory. It is written not on paper, but in the lives and hearts of men. I see a unity here, unlike any other unity in the world; I hear a voice consistent with itself and louder than all the cries of conflict, and a message that is the same for simple and wise alike; I see a Figure moving through the ages, overshadowing every country, and bearing on herself the marks of the LORD JESUS; and I hear millions of voices acclaiming her as divine. Her children are not required to be infallible; they are not asked to expect personal illumination from heaven on all points of doctrine; one thing only is given—certitude that she is what she claims to be; one thing only is asked—a simple act of faith in her mission.

"It seems to me when I pass from other theories to this that I am coming out from candlelight to day, that I am descending from a trapeze to the solid ground, that I am passing from a riot of anarchy into the presence of a quiet king. Scholarship is not asked of me, nor eloquence, nor ingenuity; no more is required than was required of Mary and Martha and James and Andrew, and which all can give—that, looking upon

this Figure, I should recognize it as from GOD, listening to the message I should acclaim it as divine; and that my highest joy and widest freedom should henceforth be found in sitting at those feet, resigning my self-will, and learning what the LORD GOD will say.

"But whether I can do all that is another question.

"For I have one vast difficulty yet to solve," says John; "and it is one that, unless answered, will knock the whole affair on the head. Is it not a fact that this infallible Church has been obliged more than once to recede from her position, and to deny what she once defined? If a single instance can be proved of this, the whole beautiful edifice falls at once.

"*What about Galileo?*"

It would delay us too long to follow John in his researches; but, briefly, this is the answer that he receives from a priest to whom he betakes himself:

"The Church never condemned Galileo. It was only the Inquisition."

"But is not the Inquisition one channel through which the Church speaks?"

"Not in that sense," answers the priest. "The Church only speaks infallibly in one of two ways: either through a General

Council confirmed by the Pope, or through the Pope speaking by himself. It is all in the penny Catechism."

"But the Pope assented to the condemnation of Galileo!"

"Not as Pope."

"Why, this is bewildering," cries John. "How am I to tell when the Pope speaks infallibly?"

"From the penny Catechism. Listen, my dear sir.

"'When I say that the Pope is infallible, I mean that the Pope cannot err when, as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church.'* Do you see? Firstly, the Pope *may* be heretical in his private opinions or statements, as John XXII was, if it is true that he really said and meant that the saints do not see God. But that has nothing whatever to do with infallibility. He is not defining a doctrine to be held by the whole Church. Secondly, the Pope may make a mistake even in a solemn public utterance if it is not on a matter of faith or morals. For example, Pius X *may* be wrong when he thinks it good for the Church that Catholics should vote in government elections, and tells them to do so. (I do not say that it may not

* § 93.

be better for us to obey even when we think he is wrong, because, after all, he is our religious superior, and is likely to know more about the matter than we; but we do not obey him then as infallible, but only as authoritative.)"

"Yes, yes, Father Brown; but *how about Galileo?* That was on the faith, because the Pope said it was distinctly heretical! And, you know, the earth does go round the sun after all!"

"Yes, but he was not speaking as 'the shepherd and teacher of all Christians,' but only as the chief official of the Inquisition. The king may give his assent to a resolution of the Privy Council, but that does not make it law. It is not the 'royal assent'; he does not speak 'as king,' but only as the chief person in the Privy Council."

"Oh!" says John.

"Yes, sir; I know it is surprising. But, after all, we must be allowed to know what we believe better than our enemies. Shall I go on?"

"If you please."

"Well, then, General Councils and Popes are only infallible on matters of faith and morals, and under the conditions I have described. And the reason is that faith and morals are the two vital functions of the Church. You told me a few days ago that

unless there was an infallible authority somewhere, you did not see how it was possible to know what Christianity really is. I agreed with you.

"But all our affairs are not absolutely vital. Physical science is not. What is vital is only our religious belief and the morality of our actions; in other words, our faith and morals. Therefore the Church only claims infallibility in those things.

"Again, theologians may make mistakes even in those things, and so may the faithful. But then theologians are not infallible, nor are the faithful. What we must have, as you rightly said, is a final, infallible authority which declares to us as much of the mind of God as is necessary for us to know.

"Once more—Popes and General Councils may state their definitions obscurely or feebly; we do not claim that 'God is the author' of their decrees in the same sense that He is the author of Scripture: we only claim that those definitions are true, and not untrue; otherwise, as you said, Where are we?"

"Yes, yes," interrupts John, "I see that. But then, if the Pope always was infallible, how comes it that he was ever resisted? Why did Meletius and Cyprian resist him? Why are councils necessary? Why didn't

the early Christians simply appeal to the Pope and have things settled?"

"That is an enormous question. Let me answer it by an allegory.

"You mentioned to me some days ago that you understood the theory of development. Very well. When a child is young, his head *is* his head, and is, in one sense, the ruler of his body. But the limbs don't quite realize it. He tries to walk, and falls down, because the limbs are not yet in full conscious relations with the brain. They are vitally one with the brain, and are, as a matter of fact, generally controlled by it; but the full realization of all that that means has not penetrated to his toes. So he tumbles.

"Gradually, however, the process of centralization goes on; the limbs learn that only by entire obedience to the head do they enjoy real security and liberty. That is the process that is called, in regard to the Catholic Church, the 'Romanizing' of nations; it means that while the Pope has always been the head, yet all that that implies is not fully and really understood by all the members of the Church. (The Gallican movement was retrograde, not progressive, therefore.) We may say then that the Vatican decree of '71, defining the Pope as infallible, was a kind of attaining of the

majority; the Church, in a sort of way, 'came of age'; just as when a boy becomes a man, it implies that the slightly clumsy, undeveloped age is passed; he now knows explicitly, what has always been an implicit fact, *that his head is his head*, and must rule every movement of his toes and fingers."

"Stop! stop!"

"One moment. With regard to councils there are more ways than one in which a child may speak. He may speak by gestures of his whole body as a sign of attraction or repulsion; and, when he is a child, he does generally so speak. It seems to him more emphatic. As he grows up his gestures become fewer and his words more frequent. When he is perfectly self-controlled, he may manage to do without gestures at all.

"Now a council is like a gesture; it is the whole body making a decisive movement. (Not that the Pope's mouth did not speak, too, quite often enough, and authoritatively enough, to shew us what the early Christians thought about him.) But as the mystical Body of CHRIST develops, there are still gestures. The Church at this moment is poised in an emphatic gesture that we call the Vatican Council—never yet dissolved; but the mouth talks more frequently. Possibly some day——"

"My dear father, you needn't say any more. I see the line—"

"It is only an analogy, remember; and there is no perfectly adequate human analogy to a divine fact."

"But it is enough for the present; I must think it out. Good night."

Gradually, then, the bewilderment passes, and John beholds a great sight.

He sees a vast mystical figure, lying athwart the world. The head rests in Rome, crowned with thorns; the body wounded, but not broken—stripped, indeed, of its own gorgeous raiment, but living—lies upon the earth. The great arms and feet stretch across land and sea. Even in far China tender fingers are groping, gathering souls into them. One common blood of faith and prayer pulsates from the beating heart through all nations, uniting them in a supernatural life such as the world has never seen. Sometimes by a slow movement the figure shifts itself from some poisonous vapour, declaring its nature by the action of the whole frame; sometimes by a word, awful and majestic, issuing from that thorn-crowned head, clamours and disputes are silenced. That huge being has taken nineteen centuries to come of age; and with that climax has followed peace.

The limbs that tossed a thousand years ago in a fever of unrest lie quiet under the supreme control of the infallible mind; and the world that has helped to wound them so grievously stands astonished at the undying vitality, the incessant energy, the enormous recuperative power more evident to-day than ever before.

And still the world that should have exhausted his malice comes to the assault again and again, carrying calumny as his sword, Protestantism as his shield, and not ashamed to use the rack and the gallows when all else fails to wound.

And the huge mystical figure shrinks in pain, for, if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, and yet survives; and the imprisoned head turns weary eyes to heaven, as if to cry, "How long?" And back again from heaven comes the answer, as an echo from Galilee of that cry that brought that life into being:

"Thou art Peter . . . The gates of hell shall not prevail . . . I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven."*

* Matt. xvi, 18, 19.

VI—Intellect, Emotion and Faith

(i)

ANOTHER difficulty remains to be cleared away; and it is one that besets many souls as they approach the threshold of Catholicism. John states it to himself in this fashion.

"I have certainly arrived at the door of the Church, following a train of thought that seems to have been naturally suggested step by step through the peculiarities of my own circumstances. But how do I know whether I have not been deceiving myself throughout? There are certainly many hundreds of difficult questions that I have not dealt with: Anglican Orders, communion in one kind, indulgences, historical facts, the writings of the Fathers and other matters. I have not dealt with them because they do not seem to me relevant. But how can I possibly tell whether they are not so? Many people that I know are held back from Catholicism simply by such considerations as these; and they tell me that I have no right to take the important step of submission until I am completely satisfied on all these points.

"Or look at the question in another way.

"As I read the newspapers day by day, I see that all over the world souls are pouring into the Roman Catholic Church. From Russia they come by tens of thousands: I am told that, such is the movement in business-like America, New York will be practically a Catholic city in another fifty years. In France, while the bourgeois nation as a body is throwing off the faith, the keenest intellects are making haste to embrace it. I can scarcely take up an English newspaper without seeing that the Rev. Mr So-and-So or Mrs Somebody else has been received into the Church. And when I consider all this, and when I read the reasons on account of which my own acquaintances have taken this step, I perceive that no two of them give quite the same account of their conversion. One was first drawn by music, another by ceremonial, another by historical continuity, another by the example of friends, another by visible unity, another by the Petrine texts and their apparent fulfilment.

"Very well then. Pure reason has very little to do with it; the Catholic claims are not as logical as they appear; or at any rate it is not on account of logic that men make their submission. There is not one plain, undeniably intellectual path by

which men approach the Catholic Church; for each gives a different account of his journey thither. And if they do not walk by pure reason, they can only walk by emotion; and emotion, as we know, is the most unsatisfactory path to follow. It has a way of suddenly ceasing and leaving one in the wilderness.

"When, therefore, I seem to myself to have come by intellect, I am deceiving myself; it is really emotion that has drawn me on; and what will happen, if, in five years' time my emotion runs dry, and I find myself bound to an institution in which I do not believe? I cannot trust myself after all!"

It would occupy us too long to follow John in all his struggles with this last difficulty. He prays, he thinks, he reads, he despairs, he hopes; and at last there takes shape in his imagination a kind of intellectual vision.

He sees a great city, the same as that which his patron saw long ago in Patmos.* It stands on a mountain, a city set on a hill; of the world, for its foundation rests on apostolic men; and of heaven, for its pinnacles reach to paradise. There is no temple in it, for God and the Lamb are in it, and every inch is sacred ground. It has no lamp

* Cf. Rev. xxi.

or light of candle; for the LORD GOD is its light, and makes it to be a city of fire, a light that cannot be hid; so that even the nations that reject it walk in the splendour that flows from it.

Its foundations are encrusted with every jewel that GOD has made; there is not one virtue or grace that does not find a place there; and the heavenly glory from within shines through the purity of the diamond, the ardour of the ruby, the delicacy of the amethyst, the hope of the emerald.

Yet every gate is one pearl. While there is variety in its ornaments, there is none in its entrances. Men may come from afar, drawn by the light of this virtue or that, but they can only enter through a pearl—a pearl of great price—for which the sacrifice of all else is a cheap exchange.

These gates, all alike, stand three on each side, facing the four quarters of the earth; for the nations of north, south, east and west, are bringing their glory into it.

The Englishman brings his sturdy justice, the American his swift prudence, the Frenchman his delicate ardour, the German his solid learning, the Chinaman his incredible patience, the Indian his philosophic acumen, the Spaniard his smouldering passion. Each nation has his gift to make, each individual his contribution; but each passes

in turn through the one and self-same gate to find his offering accepted and his poverty enriched.

There are ten thousand paths leading to this city; no two persons come the same way, for no two characters are alike. One follows the sound of an organ, one the scent of incense, one walks with the Scriptures in his hand; another is a historian, another a mystic, another a philanthropist; one is a sinner and seeks pardon; another is simple and needs illumination; another is a saint, and desires union with GOD; one is led by his mother's hand; another breaks loose from his friends to follow CHRIST. So they stream up by tens of thousands, each following his own path, each impelled by a power which he does not wholly understand; but, at the end, all meet at the same gate; each must enter by the pearl door.

"There is then," cries John, "but one thing demanded of each as he passes from the world into the city of GOD. I may be brought by intellect or emotion, by this train of thought or that, right up to the walls of the city, but I cannot enter except through one gate. I may be blind, or prejudiced, or stupid, or clever, or one-sided; I may approach the gate for the most inadequate and the most unconvincing reasons, but when I do get there, I have

but to ask myself one question: do I or do I not believe that this pearl gate gives entrance to the city of GOD? Have I or have I not conviction that this is CHRIST'S Catholic Church? I must not dare to turn back without answering: I must not venture to question the straightness of the path that has brought me here, or doubt whether I was justified in following it, or whether I should not have come more surely by another way. It does not matter in the least how I got here. *The fact remains that here I am.*

"Somehow I have been brought here; there stands a pearly vision. It may be an illusion of clouds and light; it may even be a disguised door to hell. But I dare not, for my own soul's sake, hesitate to answer. If I have conviction, I must go forward; if I have not conviction, I must turn back."

(ii)

Next he wants to consider what is this faith or divine conviction by which alone he can enter.

Years ago he made acquaintance for the first time with his friend James. He was at college with him; and afterwards chance brought them together again in a provincial town. He observed James in many circumstances; he saw him in public and in private, when he was with strangers and when he was off his guard. He quarrelled with him, argued with him, was reconciled with him; he saw his faults, his weaknesses, his virtues and his possibilities; and at last he came to the conclusion that James was, at any rate, a perfectly honourable man. He did not pretend to infallibility, but only to certitude; he was perfectly certain that James was incapable of a dishonourable action.

Two years ago John received disquieting news. A friend called upon him to warn him against James; and to relate the fact that he had been undoubtedly guilty of meanness and fraudulence. The evidence seemed most convincing; it appeared impossible to explain it away; yet it had not the smallest effect upon John.

"I tell you," he answered, "James is

simply incapable of this. I cannot disprove your evidence, but I do not believe it for an instant. I am perfectly certain that he could have done no such thing as you describe. I tell you I have complete faith in him."

"Now this," muses John, "is faith. I cannot say exactly how it came; how much my intellect had to do with it, or my emotions, or my intentions. It was a kind of gift that I received through my intercourse with James; it enabled me to believe in him in spite of all the black evidence against him. And it has been justified. I know now that although appearances were against him, he was innocent. It has all been explained away. That then is one kind of faith."

He passes on then very naturally to consider the kind of faith that the friends of Jesus Christ had in Him when He was upon earth.

They were very ignorant people for the most part; they had had no training in psychology; and yet they were capable of a virtue that the Pharisees and scribes did not possess. They must have been in great difficulties sometimes. Their friends no doubt would come to them and expostulate with them on their extraordinary folly.

"How can you believe that JESUS of Nazareth is GOD? It is simply unheard-of that GOD should be incarnate. Besides, have you not watched JESUS grow from infancy to boyhood, and boyhood to manhood? Have you not seen Him making tables and chairs in Joseph's shop? Don't you know Mary, His mother? Didn't He go to school like the other boys, say His prayers, eat, sleep, play, talk? How can you be so ridiculous as to say that He is almighty GOD?"

"And what in the world," asks John, "could the poor men answer? They couldn't argue about philosophy, and development, and the Blessed Trinity, and *Cur Deus Homo*, and all the rest of it. They couldn't possibly explain in intelligible terms why they believed Him GOD. They could only shrug their shoulders and smile, and try to say that they knew perfectly well that JESUS CHRIST was human; but that somehow—they couldn't say why—they were under the firm impression that He was more than human as well—that they were so certain, that they were willing to die for Him; to follow His lightest gesture; to leave their nets, and their friends, and their reputation for common-sense, and everything else that seemed

worth having, at a whisper from JESUS, and to follow Him through the world."

"And, after all," cries John, "this inexplicable thing called Faith has turned the world upside down. Peter and James and Bartholomew are known and reverenced throughout the entire inhabited earth, while we don't even know the names of the clever men who argued with them, and laughed at them, and despised them. Does not this faith then seem to have justified its existence? and is it not possible that the faith that I have received —for it is useless to pretend that I haven't—this conviction that the vision of the city is not an illusion, but that the gate of pearl is a reality, and that the light that shines out streams from the face of GOD—Wait! How did I receive it? When? By what particular argument? I don't know. GOD help me! I don't know. . .

"What is this that has happened to me? . . .

"I feel that a window has been thrown up behind me, sending a ray of light into the garden where I have been standing so long in the twilight. Six months ago everything was dim and undefined. Those dark shapes might have been bushes or bears or men—kindly or malevolent or indiffer-

ent. Now a light has shined. I do not know who has thrown up the window; but I think that it can be only one Person. Perhaps He will shut the window again presently; but will that make any difference? Of course not; I know now perfectly well where I am and what is round me. I know that I am in a garden, not a menagerie; I know that that glimmering thing is a statue; and that streak of paleness is a gravel path, and that blot of black a cypress. I shall always know that, whatever happens, unless I wilfully shut my eyes and make myself think something else. . .

"Well, then, this is what has happened to my soul.

"I have been staring and puzzling and arguing about things, and straining my eyes, and listening to explanations, and doing my best to be in the right attitude for seeing what is true and what is not. I have done my best not to be bitter and sarcastic; I have tried to see everybody's point of view, and to make out what they mean and what I mean. I haven't bothered about things that did not seem to concern me. I haven't asked about minute details which I can't possibly know; or even about great and important things that did not seem to me to matter personally;

and now the window has gone up, and *I know.*

"When people ask me exactly why I believe, I cannot exactly tell them. I cannot prove to them that the bush is a bush, and not a bear; they were not here when the window was opened. I can only say that I am perfectly certain; I can only say that I did have difficulties, and that I have them no longer; that some of the difficulties have actually become helps to my faith, and that others have melted. There are probably a great many other difficulties too; but, as Cardinal Newman said, 'Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt.'

"When they tell me that the Catholic Church is a human institution; that its importance grew from the fact that Rome was the capital of the old world; that the faith has gradually developed; that ambition has played a great part, and all the rest of it; I shall answer that I am quite aware of all these facts, that I know that the Church is human, but that that does not prevent her from being also divine. When they bring forward yet more serious accusations, which I cannot answer explicitly, I shall fall back on faith, as I did in that affair of James's, and tell them that I am absolutely certain that she is in-

capable of such things; that I know she cannot tell a lie; and that no amount of evidence could make me believe it.

"In other words I have received the Gift of Faith; which, as the penny catechism told me long ago, though I did not understand it then, "enables me to believe without doubting whatever God has revealed. . .

"And . . . and the best thing I can do at this moment is to put on my hat and go round to the presbytery."

VII—The Exchange

"FATHER," says John, after a few minutes' explanation, "will you kindly preach me a short discourse on what I may expect to find within the Catholic Church? I am quite determined to become a Catholic; but I should like to have a hint of what that means."

The priest looked at him a moment without speaking. Then he leaned back and began.

"I am very glad, sir, that you have been courageous enough to come. I have known many Protestants who came up to the very door, and then turned back again. They did not ask themselves whether they did or did not believe in the Catholic Church; they only wondered whether they were justified in believing it. They are exactly like the man who said to JESUS CHRIST that he must first go and bury his father; and, for all we know, he never saw our Blessed LORD again. No doubt after a few months the impression faded; he congratulated himself on having been so sensible and prudent; and his friends congratulated him too. But what a tragedy! . . .

"Well, you want to know what we have to offer.

"Three hundred years ago we could have offered you great things: the hatred of all who heard your name; the contempt of those who were loudest in their love for England. We could have offered you the Tower as your prison, chains, stinking dungeons, the rack, the whip, the gallows, the hangman's cauldron. Now we have no more than the chips of CHRIST'S cross to tempt you with; a little sneering and lifting of eyebrows; a little good-humoured laughter; a few remarks about 'intellectual servitude'; a little smiling pity over your medievalism, your materialism, your lack of the sturdy British spirit, your superstition and your fear of the priest.

"I do not know your circumstances, sir; it may possibly be that you will have greater tokens of your Saviour's love: He may be intending to raise foes for you out of your own household, to deprive you of your means of livelihood that you may learn to trust Him more entirely. He may be preparing the loss of all your friends and the contemptuous hatred of those who are dearest to you, that you may learn more perfectly the sweetness of His divine friendship. But, however that may be, you will not despise even those chips and pebbles from

Calvary. He sends them you that you may remember that where the cross is, Christ is.

"In others affairs we have greater offers to make.

"In return for the sincere sympathy and advice of your cultivated clergy, which of course you will lose, we offer you the power of the keys so far as you need them for your sins. We cannot give you many university men as your spiritual guides, but I do not know that you will feel the loss of them very much. We offer instead priests of God. In return for the words said to you in the vestry, as you knelt beside your clergyman and told him your sins—and he did his utmost to make the forgiveness of God a reality to your soul—we offer you the authoritative *Absolvo te a peccatis tuis in nomine* ✠ *Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti* spoken with the authority of him whom CHRIST commissioned to open or close the gates of heaven. There is not the shadow of a question of a doubt as to this. You will find us far more abrupt and businesslike in these matters; we shall talk much less than your former ministers; we have no zeal to justify our claim, no need to stir the emotions; for, with us, both priest and penitent are utterly satisfied as to the situation. We offer you certitude in place of doubt and

trembling hope.—Remember, you have left glamour behind you.

"Then, for controversy we offer you peace. You will not find me opposing my bishop on a matter of doctrine or ceremonial; nor will you find our religious newspapers approving this or that prelate for his sound Catholic views. All this is taken for granted with us; indeed it seems to me rather strange that it should be necessary even to say so. You will not be required to make speeches about the advantages of confession, nor to listen to them, except perhaps occasionally from the pulpit. You will not be greeted as a champion of the Church when you profess yourself in favour of "non-communicating attendance." In fact, as one of our bishops once said to a complacent convert, you will have no position at all in the Catholic Church, except that of sitting below the pulpit and kneeling at the altar-rail.

"Please do not think I am sneering. I fully realize the good faith of your old friends. I know perfectly well that they believe that it is their duty to maintain and propagate Catholic doctrines; and I thank God that they do so so sincerely and courageously. Of course I should like to see them all Catholics; but, meantime, I am extremely glad that they are disseminating the Christian faith so far as they

have received it. I admire their devotion, their single-heartedness, their courage, more than I can say. They are fighting a losing battle against fearful odds, and one cannot but respect them for it. But it is necessary for you to understand that we are in quite a different position. It may be that you will think we are lacking in zeal; but you must remember that the occasional appearance of that rises not from our want of faith but from our supreme possession of it. We are so absolutely secure and confident that at times perhaps we do become a little unwary. But we have our prophets, as well as our geese, to give the alarm when the outworks are in danger. You will be a learner now, sir, instead of possibly a teacher; and in reward for that slight humiliation you will have peace instead of strife. You are a child at school again, not a ——"

John nodded emphatically.

"That is precisely what I want to be, father."

The priest smiled pleasantly.

"That is excellent," he said. "Well, to continue——

"For your spiritual efforts we offer you sacramental communions.

"For the bread and wine received with faith and thanksgiving in remembrance that

CHRIST died for you, we offer you the very Body that shivered in the manger and agonized on the cross; the very Blood that poured on Calvary for your redemption, adored by angels and desired by men.

"For your empty altars—no doubt dear to you and consecrated by holy associations and times of refreshment and visions of GOD—we offer you the very shechinah of glory, brooding in the tabernacle that stands on every Catholic altar. You need no more question or doubt about this, or ask yourself whether the practice of reservation is in accordance with primitive practice. There it is! The Church sanctions it. *Behold the tabernacle of God with men.**

"And lastly, in return for the friends whom you may lose, who may become estranged from you, calling you renegade and traitor, we offer you the communion of a Church that knows no distinction of family or race or colour. You will have the Indians and the Japanese and the Italians and the French as your blood relations—blood-relations, for you are all born again from the same mother of salvation. If GOD takes away from you a few whom you have learned to love, He gives you in return many millions of other souls as your brethren in JESUS CHRIST.

* Rev. xxi, 3.

You will be one with the saints of all ages and lands. You need not trouble any more to decide between Aidan and Augustine; that matter has already been decided; and you may pray to whichever you please, or to both together without the fear of being historically disloyal to either.

"And we offer you more than this.

"In return for the earthly friends whom you lose, we offer you the restored friendship of all whom you have lost. You are not leaving the faith of your fathers; you are coming back to it. Your parents, who died, you tell me, twenty years ago, have been Catholics—I firmly believe after all that you have said about them—ever since you closed their eyes. They have been waiting for this, praying for this, desiring it with all their hearts. And now, please GOD, they are thanking Him for His grace and their son's response to it.

"We offer you then, in a word, the saints in glory for your helpers and defenders; the holy souls as your brethren and intercessors, Mary as your Mother, JESUS CHRIST as your lover and GOD as your all in all.

"I know, sir, that you are sacrificing more than you will confess. I understand, perhaps even better than you do yourself, the agony of each fibre as it is torn up from the ground where it has grown so long,

and you will find perhaps that the pain will be greater than at present you can conceive possible. I do not under-rate all this; in fact, I tell you plainly, that it will be worse than you think.

"But if I do not underestimate this, neither do I underestimate the reward that you will receive. I tell you that the LORD is more gracious than it is possible to imagine; that His Heart is too sweet for human language to describe; and that the Everlasting Arms have more power than you dream of. Therefore, while I think that you do not yet understand the sufferings you will undergo, as nerve by nerve is wrenched, and illusion after illusion dispelled, I am perfectly certain that you have not yet the slightest idea of all that GOD is preparing as your temporal and eternal recompense. I can only tell you that He will reward you as He alone can do."

As John left the presbytery that night, a scrap or two of Scripture ran in his head like a song.

"*Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and to the city of the living* GOD, *the heavenly Jerusalem; and to the company of many thousands of angels; and to the Church of the first-born who are written in heaven; and to* GOD *the*

Judge of all; and to the spirits of the just made perfect; and to JESUS. . ."*

"*Behold the tabernacle of* GOD *with men.* . ."†

And as his heart swells in praise and thankfulness to GOD who has shown such loving-kindness, it becomes articulate at last, as he kneels, thrilling with a devotion that he cannot understand, and seeing a mystery that he cannot interpret.

"*I am sure,*" he cries within himself, "*I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in* JESUS CHRIST *our* LORD."‡

* Heb. xi, 22-24. † Rev. xxi, 3.
‡ Rom. viii, 38, 39.

Conclusion

MANY people when they read the the biographies of great men, cannot appreciate the high thoughts and emotions contained in them, until they have first grasped a mental picture of the man in his daily life. They wish to know at what time he rose in the morning, how he occupied his time, what he wore, ate and did. Not until then can they enter into his point of view.

Now many souls believe in Catholicism in an inchoate way: they apprehend its holiness, its beliefs, its aspirations; but they are held back from appreciating these things through their ignorance of its more concrete details. They might even make their submission to the Church, were it not that they were either ignorant, or, at any rate, mistaken, as to the actual process involved in that act. There is in them a kind of nebulous faith, but it is not yet solidified into a star.

In this last lecture, then, I propose to pass from generalities to particulars, from faith in general to acts of faith, from dogma to its shrine in the penny catechism, from John at the gate of pearl to John beside the presbytery fire.

CONCLUSION

(i)

For six weeks he attends the instructions of Father Brown; the two sit together informally, and go through the main points which a man should know before he binds himself and is bound irrevocably to the Catholic Creed. They discuss the great cardinal points of the Faith—the Being of God, the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, the Church, the Sacraments; and they pass on to indulgences, relics, invocation of saints, purgatory and a rule of life.

They do not argue much; for, after all, John is convinced of the divine authority of the Catholic Church; and he is here not to criticize but to learn.

It is, of course, impossible to deal with the points individually; I propose rather to speak of the general impression on his mind.

1. Hitherto he has believed, because he understood; now he understands, because he believes; and there is a vast difference between the two positions.

As a High Churchman he has advanced step by step along the road of dogma; he came to believe in the Real Presence, because it was shown to him that the sacramental method was God's method in nature as well as in grace, that it was but natural

that man's double nature should be sanctified by a gift that has an outward sensible form as well as an inner substance; he has come to believe in absolution when it was pointed out to him that what GOD does through another He does Himself, and that the divine pardon may well be conveyed through a human agency.

But now he believes these things, not because he understands, not even because he understands them better than ever before; but because an authority which he recognizes as divine proposes them unmistakably to his acceptance.

It was so, he perceives, long ago with the disciples of JESUS CHRIST. Our LORD had been saying words which must have appeared little less than shocking to many who heard them. He had declared that unless a man ate His Body and drank His Blood, he could have no life in him; and the amazing novelty of the words had caused consternation.

The enthusiastic crowds had dispersed, murmuring, "*How can this Man give us His flesh to eat? . . . this saying is hard, and who can hear it?*"

And our LORD looks round wistfully on the puzzled faces of His friends who believe Him better than they can understand Him.

"Will you also go away?"

There rings out the Catholic answer, piteous and faithful:

"LORD, *to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. We have believed and have known*—and we must still act upon that conviction—*we have believed and have known that Thou art the* CHRIST, *the Son of* GOD."*

So John cries now in his heart:

"To whom else shall I go? I have tried all other teachers and they have failed me. Here is one whom I perceive to be divine. I may not understand yet one half of what I believe; there are matters to which I give my assent, to which I cannot give my intellect—but to whom else shall I go? Never man spake like this man. Never was there a human institution that proclaims so convincingly, so searchingly, so competently the hidden mysteries of GOD. I have believed and known; and I am coming to believe and know more overwhelmingly every day that this is the body and bride of CHRIST. This man who sits here and talks may not be very clever, or very eloquent, or very learned; but he speaks not of himself but of another; and his words ring as true in my heart. . . I believe wholly and unreservedly."

* John vi, 55-70.

2. There follows an extraordinary peace.

Years ago John had learned his alphabet from his mother; then he went to school and afterwards to the University; but he never remembered later lessons as he remembered those. At home, A came first, then B, then C; and later on it appeared as if some thought that B should begin the alphabet, that T should follow, and that the list should end with Q. At school he found himself passed on from teacher to teacher, no two of whom taught by the same method; at the University it appeared that not only in methods but in substance the doctors differed. He had compared more than once these learned discussions with the simplicity, the inevitableness, the dogmatism of his mother's teaching; and there had been the sense too that his mother cared in a way that no other teacher ever cared; she wished him to learn his alphabet, but to learn it without tears or rebellion; she wished him to be sufficiently educated, but even more to be a good child, and to become a good boy and a good man.

So now, as he sits in the presbytery, under the eye of his Holy Mother, the same air of tenderness and love and sweet dogmatism seems to fill the room. He may ask questions, of course, but it must be with

the desire of learning, not of answering again. What he hears is to be final; there is no appeal; A must be said before B; and F must follow E; and yet that is not all. His Mother wishes him to be a good son, and become a good Catholic rather than a theologian. He begins to understand as never before that the childlike mind is the best, and that without it he cannot enter upon his inheritance of heaven. He catches a breath of sweetness from the words said so long ago; he begins to finger lovingly CHRIST'S yoke, and to learn of Him who was meek and humble of Heart, and to find rest to his soul; for CHRIST'S yoke is sweet and His burden light.

(ii)

Among the questions that he puts there is the following:

"What am I to think about Anglican sacraments? My friends tell me that I must be rebaptized, and that this is contradictory to the Church's teaching on the subject. She teaches, I understand, that even lay-baptism is valid. Now I was baptized by a clergyman when I was a child. Why then need I be rebaptized? Then there are the other sacraments——"

"One moment," answers the priest, "let us settle baptism first. Can you tell me for certain that the clergyman baptized you properly? Of course if you can prove this, there will be no question of my baptizing you."

"What do you mean by 'properly,' father?"

"Well, our LORD said 'Water and the Spirit.' Some people are very careless about water. I remember once seeing a clergyman sprinkle water towards a boy and a girl who stood about two yards from the font, and I doubt very much whether it even touched them. You see some Church of England clergy honestly do not believe that it matters very much; so of course they are not very particular about it. Why

should they be? But in that case the candidates did not have done to them what our LORD meant when He said 'Water.' Of course some people differ from us; but the Catholic Church does not pretend to be more spiritual than JESUS CHRIST; she says 'water' because He did."

"I see. Well, I can't prove that I was properly baptized. I have no witnesses, and the clergyman is dead."

"Then you must be baptized conditionally. I shall pour water on your head and say that if you are not baptized, I baptize you. If, after all, you were baptized, no harm is done; and if you were not, well, it will be true baptism. There is no question of repeating baptism. Do you understand?"

"Yes; I understand, father. And about the other sacraments?"

"Yes; put it as strongly as you like."

"Well," answers John, "my friends are at me for what they say is my repudiation of grace. It is perfectly true that I was very often very happy after receiving Anglican sacraments. When I made my confessions, I never doubted for a moment that I was properly absolved. When I came down again from communion, I was often full of holy thoughts and desires, and was quite sure that I had received JESUS CHRIST.

Now, is it really true, father, that I have got to say that all that was nothing at all, or even that it was Satan who made me feel happy in order to keep me back from thinking of the Catholic Church?"

"No, no; nothing so ridiculous. Your friends do not know what they are talking about. The Church does not tell you to believe anything so absurd. When you went to confession and communion in the Church of England, you did your best, I am sure, to be in proper dispositions, to love GOD, and to be really sorry for your sins. Well, then, GOD rewarded you by giving you those holy feelings and thoughts. Every time you were truly contrite He forgave you your sins; and every time you went to communion, because you wished to please Him, He gave you grace. But it was not sacramental grace; the clergyman had no authority to bind or to loose, and no power to consecrate the Body of the LORD; but all that grace was real grace to help you. All that you have to repudiate is your ideas about it, your intellectual conception of it; not the grace itself. Is that any clearer?"

"It is perfectly clear; thank you very much."

"Tell your friends that, the next time they

talk. Tell them that they have simply no idea of what the Church does teach. Why St Gertrude once said that a good spiritual communion often gave more grace than a lukewarm sacramental communion, and the Church expressly teaches that an act of perfect contrition wins forgiveness in the absence of a priest. Of course you have got to confess all your sins again—to carry out your acts of contrition (an act of contrition includes the intention to fulfil all God's requirements); and now you are able to do that, you must, of course, do it. But your feelings of forgiveness after Anglican absolutions were perfectly true and genuine. God forgave you, because you loved Him and wished to conform to the Sacrament of Penance, not because you actually received it."

"I understand. . . Please tell me about my confession."

"There is very little to tell beyond what I have told you already. You must not be scrupulous and torment yourself. It is probably impossible for you to remember every mortal sin you have ever committed; and God only asks you to do your best. You must, as you know, tell anything that you can remember and then leave it. I advise you not to bring a paper with you; it is apt to breed scruples, and

you can be as informal as you like. It is very simple."

John sighed.

"Yes," he said, "and very hard."

"No, not so hard, if you look beyond it.... I remember as a boy coming home from school I had a very long drive from the station in a dog-cart. I lived in the north, and the drive was terribly cold sometimes in winter. But, you know, I did not mind it much. Of course, it was not pleasant; but then there was the home-coming to look forward to—the lights, the warmth, my mother—in fact, home. Do you understand?"

"I understand, father."

"Well, then, shall we say next Thursday at 4 o'clock?"

As John kneels in the Church on the following Thursday a few minutes before four o'clock he is conscious of great excitement and great fear.

It is a dingy little place, wholly unimpressive in itself; yet it has the strange silence that he has so often noticed there before. From outside come the murmur of wheels, the patter of feet on the pavement, the rumour of a world that goes about its business; and he has the sensation of a swimmer who stands poised on the edge

of a deep-flowing stream. He wishes he had not come, or that he had come sooner, or that the day had been fixed a week hence; and although he is physically free to get up and go out, it is a morally impossible act. The shock of the plunge is imminent; he will be presently among those mysteries half seen through the wrinkled swirl of the surface; and he knows they will look very differently then, but he is not certain whether they will be more or less inviting when he is amid the medium that half discloses, half conceals, their nature.

But the silence becomes vivid and alive as he stares disconsolately at the steady little red spark overhead above the tabernacle, and finds at last a supersensual voice.

"*It is I: Be not afraid.*"* . . .

A figure looks out presently from the sacristy-door, beckons him up to the side-chapel, and John finds himself with the Ritual in his hands reading out, a little tremulously, the profession of faith. It has all come about with the swiftness of thought, and his voice steadies and his heart burns as the sounding proclamation streams from his lips.

* John vi, 20.

Here are all the matters for which he has contended and argued so long, which have been denied and explained away and questioned by those who were of one communion with himself—here they all are now, declared without fear or compromise. First comes the Nicene Creed, and then an elucidation of its challenged clauses, made necessary by those who accept the old words but deny the old sense of them.

He professes seven sacraments now, not two (generally necessary) and five doubtful ordinances; and he admits and receives the ceremonies customary in their administration. He professes likewise his faith in the sacrifice of the Mass, true, proper and propitiatory for the living and the dead; he declares that in the sacrament of the Eucharist there is truly, really and substantially the Body and Blood, together with the Soul and Divinity of our LORD JESUS CHRIST: and he names the conversion of the substance of the elements transubstantiation. He states the doctrines of Purgatory, prayers for the dead and indulgences; and declares that the saints reigning with CHRIST are to be honoured and invocated.

So it goes on, clause after clause, till at last he promises his own true and personal obedience to the Bishop of Rome, suc-

cessor to St Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and Vicar of JESUS CHRIST. There it is, all printed in the book, declared by his lips, and witnessed by a Catholic priest.

He finds himself immediately afterwards in the confessional, and the sharpest point of his trial is before him.

Yet as he kneels there and asks a blessing, the sting seems already half drawn.

First, it is all so impersonal. There is a grill before his face through which he can see only the faint profile of the priest and the white of his cotta and the purple stripe of his stole; the human element is almost absent, and what there is of it is reassuring. He remembers the tremendous secret of the ordinance—that not one of the ten thousand enemies of the Church has ever yet proved a single example of its violation; he remembers how discretion and tenderness—those two most comfortable virtues—have been drummed and drilled into every priest, until training has merged into character. Above all, between himself and the other, hangs a crucified Figure with arms outstretched in embrace, not lifted in rebuke or condemnation; every word that he himself utters passes through the fragrant air of Calvary, every word that he will hear presently must come through the same medium. That priest

within is bound to think and speak as JESUS CHRIST Himself would think and speak; he is there, not to condemn or rebuke, but to welcome, forgive and reconcile. The dying brigand, the repentant adulteress, the cowardly friend—Dismas, Magdalene and Peter—representatives together of a whole world of sin, each found gentleness not wrath, welcome not disfranchisement. . . And so the tale flows out easily and sweetly till all is done, and the bar is passed, and all that remains is to moor the vessel in the haven where it would be.

After a word or two of encouragement and blessing, he follows the priest into the sacristy; and three minutes later he is back again, trembling a little, kneeling once more at the grill to hear the words that are to reward his efforts and give him peace.

Ah, this is the supreme moment; it is worth all the agony a hundred times repeated to receive this first Catholic absolution! To his eyes it appears as if the golden keys, given by CHRIST to Peter so long ago, are actually present; as if the gate of pearl visibly rolls back in response to his knock.

He is relieved first of all of excommunication and interdict unwittingly incurred; the burden of three hundred years of heresy

is lifted from his shoulders—this is indeed a going behind the Reformation to the days when no religion other than this was dreamed of in England; when Englishmen who loved CHRIST honoured His Vicar; when the Church which they served was Catholic in fact as well as in name; before Henry, mad with lust and ambition, rent the seamless tunic of CHRIST, hacked at the branches of the heavenly vine, and ravened in the flock purchased with the Blood of the Son of GOD. . . Then, as in a dream, he sees the hand lifted and moved in the sign of the cross, and hears the voice raised a little to press home the personal pardon.

"*Absolvo te a peccatis tuis: in nomine* ✠ *Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.*". . .

He is back again in his seat now, his hands clasped, and a great contentment in his heart. How often has he knelt here before, an outcast in spite of his corporal presence, trying to imitate out of reverence and good manners the gestures and attitudes of the true citizens of GOD, yet fearing all the while that he was not one of them! Hitherto, the confessional he has so often looked at with dread and envy, has been a sealed chamber to him, into which none but the children of the kingdom

might enter; now he has entered himself, received the mystery, and come back again. That little white curtain above the altar which he has seen drawn a hundred times has never yet been drawn for him; to-morrow he will receive the heavenly food that tabernacles there among man. From the mean little pulpit over him he has so often heard exposition and exhortation, but it was to judge or approve or demur as his private judgement preferred; next Sunday he will sit here to listen and be taught.

He is a true Catholic at last; others will give him the name that he has so often claimed in vain. He is a living stone at last, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, CHRIST Himself being the head corner-stone, in the vast edifice of glory where GOD has set His seat; he is a living tendril of the vine enkindled by GOD'S Blood, watered by the tears of saints, brought out of Egypt long ago—a tendril that will in time bring forth new and supernatural fruits of faith, penance and holiness; he is a child come home at last—a child who has learned his A B C and passed his examination and pleased his mother;—a child, bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh, mystically born, not adopted; a child at home with his brethren the saints—at home in that place in which

alone men's hearts can rest, the Sacred Heart of JESUS pierced for him. . .

What then does anything else matter? Sorrow can be no more than a prick, death no more than a passing swoon; for to live is CHRIST, and to die is gain. . .

St Peter in Scripture

AS regards the Petrine texts appended below, John notices the following points, to which his attention is drawn in a small controversial work which he meets with in the course of his studies:

1. Their full recognition has been of comparatively late date. By divine guidance St Peter himself sought the city and established his See just where he would gain all the aid that natural and human surroundings could give him for the swift and sure development of the final supremacy of his Chair. This supremacy was no more the *result* of mere worldly circumstances than the healthy growth of a tree is the result of the mere soil in which its seed once found a congenial home. If the authority on the one hand, and the seed on the other, had not existed, neither the Chair of Peter nor the tree would have emerged.

It was not, then, until the head had been fully established as supreme over the body that men had eyes to see how it had been so ordained and indicated from the beginning. After it had come to pass it was seen to have been inevitable. All this is paralleled, of course, by the ordinary course of affairs. Laws of nature, as well as laws of

grace, act quite apart from man's perception or appreciation of them; and it is not until the law is recognized that its significance and inevitability, its illustrations and effects, are intelligently recognized either.

2. The weight of the following list of passages rests in its cumulative force. The direction of one or two or even three straws falling in a certain direction may be the result of a chance draught; thirty straws all falling in one direction practically indicate a steady wind.

1. St Peter's name occurs first in all lists of apostles (Matt. x, 2; Mark iii, 16; Luke vi, 14; Acts i, 13).

2. He alone receives a new name, solemnly conferred (John i, 42).

3. The name he receives is *peculiarly* inapplicable to his personal character and history; presumably, therefore, it is applied to his official position, and, moreover, it embodies a metaphor which is specially applied by him to CHRIST in an analogous sense (1 Peter ii, 4–8; cf. Matt. xxi, 42).

4. He is the first to confess CHRIST's divinity, and receives special promises, namely, (*a*) "On this rock I will build My Church"; (*b*) "The keys of the kingdom of heaven"; (*c*) he alone is told that he has received divine knowledge by a special revelation (Matt. xvi, 17–19).

5. He is treated by the world as CHRIST's representative; and he is so accepted by CHRIST, who by an unique miracle specially associates together Himself and Peter (Matt. xvii, 24 ff.)

6. From his boat CHRIST teaches; and the miraculous draught and its interpretation follow that incident (Luke v, 3 ff.)

7. He is indicated as being the object of CHRIST's special prayer, distinct from the others ("Satan hath desired to have *you*. . . I have prayed for *thee*. . .") and as the support of the others (Luke xxii, 31, 32).

8. He was the first of the apostles to set out for and, in spite of his age, to enter the empty tomb (Luke xxiv, 12; John xx, 6); and he is distinguished by the angel as the leader and representative of the rest (Mark xvi, 7).

9. He leads the apostles in fishing (John xxi, 2, 3)—a significant metaphor.

10. He alone casts himself into the sea to come to JESUS (John xxi, 7).

11. He alone receives a special threefold commission as vicar of the Good Shepherd (John xxi, 15 ff.); and he is addressed by CHRIST as if in some special sense he was was to abide till CHRIST's second coming (John xxi, 22).

12. He takes the lead in filling up the vacant apostolate (Acts i, 15).

13. He first preaches at Pentecost and summons men to salvation (Acts ii, 14); and is accepted by the world as the leader and interpreter of the rest (Acts ii, 37, 38, 41).

14. He works the first Church miracle, even though associated with John (as if to show his official relation as distinguished from John's personal relation to CHRIST) (Acts iii, 1-10); and comments on it to the crowd (Acts iii, 12).

15. He is the defender of the Church before the rulers (Acts iv, 8 ff.)

16. He utters the first anathema, and it is ratified markedly by GOD (Acts v, 2-11).

17. His shadow, alone among all, works miracles (Acts v, 15).

18. He is the first to raise the dead (Acts ix, 40).

19. He is indicated by GOD as the proper person to apply to for instruction and baptism; and is the first to receive the Gentiles (Acts x, 5, 34, 47).

20. He receives an unique threefold revelation (Acts x, 10 ff.)

21. He instructs the other apostles on the catholicity of the Church (Acts xi, 5-17).

22. He is the object of the first divine interposition on behalf of an individual; and is rescued from death when another apostle is killed (Acts xii, 5-17).

23. He opens the first Council, and lays down principles afterwards accepted by it (Acts xv, 7-11).

24. St Paul mentions the appearance to Cephas as first in importance (1 Cor. xv, 5).

25. St Paul goes to visit him, specially, at Jerusalem, considering him of more importance than James the local bishop (Gal. i, 18).

26. St Paul twice speaks of resisting him, as if it were a very serious step (Gal. ii, 11, 14).

27. He is spoken of as if in some sense distinct from the rest, many times (Mark i, 36; Luke ix, 28; Acts ii, 37, and v, 29, etc.); and he is often spokesman for the rest.

28. He is spoken of as the first of the inner three several times (Matt. xvii, 1; Mark v, 37; Matt. xxvi, 37, 40; Mark xiv, 37).

29. He himself refers twice to the "shepherding" of CHRIST; as if this function of his Master's were much in his mind (1 Pet. ii, 25, and v, 4; cf. John xxi, 15).

Primitive Papalists

HERE also are appended a few patristic and conciliar quotations, which John finds in the same little controversial work as the Scripture texts on St Peter. He finds it difficult to resist the conclusion that his dawning belief in the validity of the Petrine claims was the belief held also in the early ages of the Church. He notices that the authenticity of the quotations in question rests upon the word of Dom John Chapman, O.S.B.

1. *St Clement of Rome*, A.D. 96:

"If any should disobey the things spoken by Him through us, let them know that they will involve themselves in no light transgression and danger."—*Ad Cor.* c. lix, 1.

(Bishop Lightfoot describes this letter of St Clement to the Corinthians as "the first step towards papal aggression.")

2. *St Irenæus*, A.D. 185, *writes of Rome:*

By "pointing out . . . that 'faith announced to all men' (Rom. i, 8), which through the succession of her bishops has come down to us, we confound all those who in any way, whether through caprice, or vainglory, or blindness, or perverse opinion, gather otherwise than it behoveth. For with this Church, on account of her more powerful headship, it is necessary that every Church, that is, the faithful everywhere dispersed, should agree (or 'come together'); in which Church has always been preserved that tradition which is from the apostles."—*Hær.* iii, 3.

3. *St Cyprian writes,* A.D. 251, *of certain heretics:*

"After all this, and having had a false bishop set up for them by heretics, they dare to set sail, and to carry letters from schismatic and profane persons to the Chair of Peter and the primatial Church, whence sacerdotal unity had its rise; nor do they consider that those are the Romans whose faith was celebrated by the praise of the apostle [cf. Rom. i, 8], to whom unfaith cannot have access."—*Ep.* lix, 14.

4. *The Council of Arles,* A.D. 314, *writes to Pope Silvester:*

"Since you have been unable to leave those parts, where the apostles also sit daily, and their blood testifies without intermission the glory of God. . ."—Mansi, ii, 469.

5. *St Athanasius,* A.D. 339, *appeals to Rome and goes there; and Socrates,* A.D. 439, *thus writes of it:*

"Eusebius, having accomplished what he desired. sent an embassy to Julius, Bishop of Rome, calling upon him to be the judge of the charges against Athanasius, and to summon the case to himself."—*Hist. Eccl.* ii, 2.

Sozomen, A.D. 450, *writes thus:*

"Eusebius wrote to Julius that he should be judge of what had been decreed at Tyre."—*Hist. Eccl.* iii, 7.

Theodoret, A.D. 450, *thus describes it:*

"He [Pope Julius] following the law of the Church, both ordered them to repair to Rome, and also summoned the divine Athanasius to judgement."—*Hist. Eccl.* ii, 4.

6. *The Council of Sardica*, A.D. 346, *writes:*

"For this will seem to be best, and by far the most proper course, if the bishops of the Lord, from every province, shall refer to the head, that is, the See of Peter."—*Letter to Pope Julius.* Mansi, iii, 40.

7. *St Gregory of Nazianzum*, A.D. 307:

"The faith [of Rome] was of old, and still is now, right, binding the whole West by the saving word: as is just in her who presides over all, reverencing the whole harmony of God."—*Carmen de Vita sua*, 568–72.

8. *St Jerome*, C. A.D. 376, *writes to Pope Damasus:*

"I am linked in communion with thy Blessedness, that is, with the Chair of Peter. On that rock I know that the Church is built. Whoso shall eat the Lamb outside this house is profane. . . Whoso gathereth not with thee scattereth: that is, he who is not of Christ is of Antichrist."—*Ep.* xv.

And in another place, C. A.D. 377:

"Meanwhile I cease not to cry out: If anyone is joined to the See of Peter, he is mine. . . I conjure your Blessedness . . . that you would signify to me by your letters with which bishop in Syria it is my duty to communicate."—*Ep.* xvi.

9. *The Council of Aquileia*, A.D. 381, *writes:*

"We . . . beseech your clemency not to allow the Roman Church, the head of the whole Roman world, and that most holy faith of the apostles, to be troubled; for from thence the rights of venerable communion flow forth to all."—St Ambrose, *Ep.* xi, 4.

10. *The Council of Rome under Damasus* A.D. 382, *writes:*

"Although all the Catholic Churches in the world

are one bridal chamber of Christ, yet the holy Roman Catholic Apostolic Church has been preferred to the other Churches by no synodical constitutions, but has obtained the primacy by the voice of our Lord and Saviour in the Gospel, saying, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock . . . . loosed in heaven.'"—See C. H. Turner in *Journal of Theol. Studies*, Jan. 1900.

11. *St Optatus*, A.D. 385:

"That in that one Chair [established by Peter] unity might be preserved by all . . . . and that he might at once be condemned as a schismatic and sinner, who against that pre-eminent Chair should place another. Therefore in that one Chair, which is the first of the prerogatives, Peter sat first, to whom succeeded Linus; to Linus, Clement . . . . Siricius with whom the whole world is in accordance with us in the one bond of communion, by the intercourse of letters of peace."—ii, 2.

12. *Pope Siricius*, A.D. 385:

". . . . You referred to the Roman Church as to the head of your body; . . . . in me that burden is borne by the blessed Apostle Peter, who, we trust, in all things protects and has regard to us who are the heirs of his government."—*Ep.* i, 20.

13. *St Augustine*, A.D. 391:

"I am held by the succession of bishops from the very Chair of Peter the Apostle, to whom the Lord commended His sheep to be fed, up to the present episcopate; lastly, I am held by the very name of Catholic, which, not without cause amid so many heresies, this Church alone has retained, in such sort that whereas all heretics wish to be called Catholics, nevertheless to any stranger who asked, 'Where is the meeting of the Catholic Church held?' no heretic would dare to point out his own basilica or house.'—*C. Ep. Manich. Fundam.* iv, 5.

Again he writes, after quoting a letter of Pope Innocent, A.D. 419:

"Do you see what the Catholic faith holds by her minister?"—*Op. Imperf.* vi, 11.

Again at Carthage he said, A.D. 417:

"Already two councils have been sent to the Apostolic See concerning this matter, and rescripts have come from thence. The case is concluded: would that the error would soon cease also."—*Serm.* 131, 10.

14. *Pope St Anastasius,* A.D. 401:

"I will certainly not be wanting . . . . to call upon the parts of my body throughout the various regions of the world."—*Ep.* 1. *ad Joan. Hieros.*

15. *Paulinus of Milan* A.D. 417, *writes to Pope Zosimus:*

"Let that which . . . has been publicly brought to light be now cut off by your Holiness with the spiritual sword, that the flock of the Lord [the whole Church] which you govern as a good shepherd . . . . may no longer be torn by this wild beast's teeth."—*Op. S. Augustini,* vol. x, Appendix, p. 1725 (*Migne*).

16. *Pope St Innocent,* A.D. 417:

"You decided that it was proper to refer to our judgement, knowing what is due to the Apostolic See." . . . . "You have . . . . preserved the customs of the Fathers, and have not spurned that which they decreed by a divine and not human sentence, that whatsoever is done, even though it be done in distant provinces, should not be ended without being brought to the knowledge of this See; that by its authority the whole just pronouncement should be strengthened; and that from it all other Churches (like waters, flowing from their natal source and flowing through the different regions of the world, the pure streams of one

uncorrupted head), should receive what they ought to enjoin."—*S. Aug. Ep.* 181.

17. *Pope St Zosimus*, A.D. 417 *writes:*

"We must pray incessantly that, by the continual grace and unceasing assistance of God, from this fountain [the Apostolic See] the peace of the faith and of Catholic brotherhood may be sent into the whole world."—*Ep.* ii.

18. *Pope St Boniface*, A.D. 419, *writes:*

"Never was it lawful to discuss again any matter which had once been decided by the Apostolic See."—*Ep.* xiii.

19. *Pope St Celestine*, A.D. 422:

"We, on whom Christ has, in the person of holy Peter the Apostle, when He gave him the keys to open and shut, imposed as a necessity to be engaged about all men . . . ."—*Ep.* iii.

20. *Council of Ephesus*, A.D. 431, *writes in sentence of deposition against Nestorius:*

"Whereas [etc.] . . . . we being necessarily compelled by the sacred canons and by the letter of our most holy Father and colleague, Bishop Celestine, Bishop of the Roman Church, with many tears, have arrived at this sad sentence against him."—Mansi, iv, p. 1212.

21. *Pope St Sixtus III*, A.D. 434:

"The blessed Peter, in his successors, has delivered that which he received."—*Ep.* vi.

22. *St Vincent of Lerins*, A.D. 434, *writes*:

"Pope Stephen, of blessed memory, Prelate of the Apostolic See, together with the rest of his colleagues indeed, yet above the rest, resisted; thinking, I ween, that it was right that he should conquer them all by the devotion of his faith as much as he surpassed them by the authority of his place."—*Common.* vi.

23. *Pope St Leo,* A.D. 450:

"By the see of blessed Peter, made the head of the universe, thou (O Rome) mightest rule more widely by divine religion than by earthly empire" (*Serm.* 82). ". . . The first of all the Sees . . . the Head . . . that See which the Lord appointed to preside over the rest . . ." (*Ep.* cxx). "The care of the universal Church should converge to the one See of Peter, and no part anywhere be at variance with its Head." —*Ep.* xiv.

24. *Council of Chalcedon,* A.D. 451, *writes in the sentence of deposition, read by the papal legates and signed by all the bishops, against Dioscorus:*

"Wherefore the most holy and blessed archbishop of great and elder Rome, Leo, by us and by the present holy synod, together with the thrice blessed and glorious Peter the Apostle, who is the rock and base of the Catholic Church and the foundation of the orthodox faith, has stripped Dioscorus of the episcopal . . . dignity."—Mansi, vi, p. 1,048.

And the Council writes to Pope Leo:

"The bishops . . . over whom you presided as a head over the members . . ."—*Op. S. Leonis, Ep.* 98.

And of Dioscorus:

"He [Dioscorus] stretched forth his madness against him who was entrusted by the Saviour with the guardianship of the Vine—we mean your Holiness . . ." [and further with regard to the twenty-eighth canon] ". . . We beg you honour the judgement with your approbation also; as we have added our consent to the Head in all good things, so let the Head fulfil what is befitting towards the children . . ." [and further] ". . . We have made known to you the whole tenor of the business, for our own defence and

for the confirmation and approval of what has been done by us."—Ibid.

25. *Anatolius, Patriarch of Constantinople,* A.D. 451, *writes to Pope Leo with reference to the Council of Chalcedon:*

"This decree the holy synod and we have referred to your Holiness in order to obtain from you approval and confirmation. . . For the throne of Constantinople has your apostolic throne as its father."—*Op. S. Leonis, Ep.* 101, 5.

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AUTHOR

The Religion of the Plain Man

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